Catherine de Gardeville

BERTHA RADFORD SUTTON

A Merry Christmas

From Pa and Ma to Rose

God Bless You

CATHERINE DE GARDEVILLE

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BY
BERTHA RADFORD SUTTON

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I

Mrs. Lambeth, the chatelaine of Old Park, had original ideas on the subject of a tranquil life. She adored, so she had been heard to say, peace and quietness. She had confessed, with a distracting smile, during the contortions of a modern dance, that her soul was Buddhist: that she was only completely herself when, far from the haunts of man, she could enjoy the fine rapture of contemplation and the—the—"Rather!" her partner had drawled, and she had felt herself understood.

Clearly, she had missed her vocation, for her life was quite contrary to its beatific ideal, and her friends rather gathered the impression that she was making no sacrifice. Her sleek Eton crop hardly suggested a halo, though the curved lips certainly bore the colors of martyrdom. Perhaps among her friends, and they were many, there was a growing conviction that if there were any martyrs, they were undoubtedly Catherine her daughter, and Colonel Lambeth her husband. Ever since she could remember anything, Catherine had understood that the noisy, gay, expensive life that her mother led was entirely for the good of Catherine her-

self, and for the welfare of her stepfather, who was supposed to need "taking out of himself."

But no one dared to call him a martyr. He hugged his chains. He had adored Chris Graham ever since she had come with her mother years ago to Eton to visit a cousin. He had hated the cousin, but from that day he had studiously cultivated the youth with a certain amount of success.

Alas, the lovely Chris had married a Frenchman with a great name but a ruined exchequer, and before her large fortune had had time to restore the ancient splendors, the "unspeakable Frenchman"—it was Lambeth's adjective of male jealousy—died, leaving the tiny Catherine to console the momentarily inconsolable widow. Fortunately, or perhaps unfortunately for John Lambeth, his grave, heavy, sympathetic, protecting air appealed to the distraught Chris, whose grief seemed to be more rage at the "perfectly dreadful time" she had been passing through, than at any feeling of loss. She refused even to talk of her short married life—they had traveled and moved about constantly. In the shortest time compatible with the most modern ideas of decency, Madame de Gardeville became Mrs. John Lambeth, and as Chris seemed anxious to forget her first matrimonial venture, Catherine was known as Miss Lambeth.

"I think I should like my own name, it's so pretty, de Gardeville," she said one day, as she filled her mother's case with cards on which the legend "Miss Lambeth" had been printed, underneath her mother's name.

"Too complicated! Two names would mean such a lot of explaining after all these years."

"But I don't see why," Catherine had said gently. "I love Daddy dearly, but I'd like to feel I belonged to my own father."

However, pretty Mrs. Lambeth had shown herself very determined and Catherine had not mentioned it again, and Miss Catherine Lambeth, presented by her mother Mrs. John Lambeth, had been the youngest and certainly the loveliest débutante at the first court of the season. After that she was overlooked. That is to say, the very fascinating Mrs. Lambeth had absorbed all the attention and admiration of her circle, and Catherine and her stepfather were generally considered only as gentleman and lady-in-waiting.

So when Mrs. Lambeth, suddenly bored with the perpetual noise of her daily life, declared she must at last really begin to think about herself, and try to find a little of her adored tranquillity at Old Park, John and Catherine contemplated the preparations for departure from the big London house with doubtful joy. How long was the phase to last? They both loved Old Park—the great house that had been the Grahams' for many generations and which was now theirs. But Chris seemed quite determined. John was a little curious, and discretion was not always a strong feature with him. They had been dining with friends who were entertaining a distinguished Frenchman recently elected to the Académie Française. John thought Chris had been very witty, very seductive. She had amused the great man and held his attention, but they

had talked in such rapid French that John had caught nothing. Later on, just as he was going to join them in the drawing-room, Chris had abruptly moved away, and John, quick to notice her expressions, thought something had annoyed her. But she was smiling and gay when she whispered a minute after, "Let's get away—these rooms are too hot."

Perhaps it was the heat, but generally Chris liked a tropical atmosphere. And Monsieur Henri Toulon, the great novelist which was all Colonel Lambeth knew of him, had seemed as attracted by Chris as Chris had seemed charmed with him—at first. "Oh Mother, what luck meeting Henri Toulon! How I wish I had been invited."

Catherine sat by her mother's bed the next morning, as Chris took her tea and toast, paying no attention to the letters and notes that lay on the tray.

"What do *you* know about Henri Toulon?" Chris said sharply as if she were suddenly surprised.

"What all the rest of the world does I suppose. I've got all his books and most of his reviews."

"I won't have you reading his books—" began Chris quickly, and then evidently noticing Catherine's astonishment at her mother's unwonted attitude—she had never advised or forbidden any sort of ancient or modern literature to Catherine—she added, a little lamely,

"Your father doesn't approve of him." Catherine laughed happily. "But Daddy doesn't read French, so he must be ruled out. I expect he just doesn't like Toulon because he is a Catholic writer."

"You read too much Catherine, and I agree that he should be condemned for that reason. I want to hear no more about the matter, nor about that Frenchman either. There, you have made me spill my tea. Ring for Smith please." Catherine went slowly away. Her mother had been very curious. At lunch she announced in a very decided voice that they were to go at once to Old Park, for whose peaceful country joys she yearned. John and Catherine professed themselves quite content with the prospect, and Mrs. Lambeth seemed appeased at their acquiescence. She even offered Catherine a new riding suit, as compensation for missing some of the joys of London, but Catherine laughingly refused it. She had plenty she said, and at the worst could fall back on her old habit which no doubt she would find laid away with other ancient tapestries and *objets de vertu* at Old Park.

"Why has Mother got this sudden idea of burying herself, Daddy? Shall we all be carted back again in a week's time?"

John Lambeth smiled suddenly and for a moment his rather heavy plain face was illumined.

"My dear child, that's not the way to talk of your mother," he began, and Catherine squeezed his arm with a little laugh.

"Well you see, I'm not so acclimatized as you are. I heard her saying she was going to be a theosophist, so I just wondered if she'd had a communication."

They were walking through Kensington Gardens. Catherine had been charged to accompany her stepfather on some farewell visits, and to explain that their

sudden flight from London was due to the necessity of superintending alterations at Old Park.

"Well, yes, she had a communication all right," smiled John Lambeth, "but it was from Mrs. Mead at Old Park, to say the brocade curtains of the big drawing-room were falling to pieces, and that she fears the worst."

"Blessed old curtains then—but all the same, my dear, those curtains are a blind! Mother's been overdoing it lately and she wants a rest. There's old Lady Grant and a man—and they are making for us. He looks rather nice."

The last words were muttered as she dropped the Colonel's arm and he had no time to reply to her sotto voce, or he would have told her that he and her mother had already met the celebrated writer at Lady Grant's dinner. Lady Grant—"old" Lady Grant, as young eighteen-year-old Catherine had callously called her, was, according to Burke, in her sixty-fifth year, but a Burkeless and sympathetic person might easily have mistaken her for a handsome woman of forty. The rich widow of a distinguished diplomat, she prided herself on still reflecting if not wielding some of the power of her official past. Certainly among the modern receptions of London hers more nearly approached the salon of her ambition. There was a certain altruism in attracting the *spirituel* to her house. She believed firmly she had brought to the notice of the world several poets, numerous authors, countless artists, all of whom had written her sonnets, dedicated books to her, and lined the Academy walls with her

portraits. These, she justly considered she had helped. But her salon did not lack distinguished men and women who added more to her reputation than she did to theirs.

The man who was with her seemed to be about fifty—yet Catherine, looking at his fine powerful face for a moment, thought he was a young man. There were others too who caught glimpses of the eternal youth in the fine eyes of Henri Toulon, member of the Académie Française, writer of romance, gay and serious, wittiest of France's brilliant orators, ardent Catholic, and yet writer of some books that had been gravely criticized by his church.

"Here you are at last, Catherine—how d'you do, Colonel Lambeth—Monsieur Toulon, here is your most generous critic—a perfect little gourmand of all you write and all that is written about you!" As she spoke, Lady Grant seemed to wrap them all three in a radiating trinity of smiles and good fellowship. It was what she prided herself on doing.

Catherine's little flush as she heard his name and gave him her hand slowly was a delicate flattery that pleased Toulon. But for an introduction and a Frenchman, albeit not a young man, he held Catherine's hand for a long moment as his eyes seemed to take in the lovely oval face—with its determined little chin, its delicate shapely little nose, and the dark eyes that regarded him with such naïve pleasure.

"Lest Mademoiselle repent her kind indulgence, I must walk delicately." He spoke in English, slowly, and then letting her withdraw her hand, he turned

to Colonel Lambeth and seemed to compare his face with Catherine's as he said, smiling:

"If you all speak French as perfectly as Madame Lambeth" [he said *"Lambett"*], "I will spare you my bad English."

Colonel Lambeth was just going to explain that his own French left much to be desired, when Lady Grant, who had been chattering to Catherine, interrupted gayly:

"Colonel Lambeth's wife and daughter are excellent linguists." Daughter! Henri Toulon walked slowly along the path beside Lambeth, listening with an air of polite attention to his remarks, but with his mind working in another direction. How could that girl with her marvelous face, out of which the veiled wonders of a lovely soul seemed to be shining—how could she be the daughter of this pleasant, heavy, worthy English colonel in his stiff collar and smart spats! And where had he seen that face before? It was a face he knew and loved—but the face he had known had been alive and brilliant with the wonders—unveiled wonders of the soul that had illumined it! Curious. Catherine turned to speak to her father and Toulon almost caught his breath. But it was his poor friend long since dead, who laughed with the little catch and twisted a tiny corner of her eyebrow as she said—in the voice he had not heard for twenty years, "Daddy, we must sprint for all we're worth, or we shall be keeping mother waiting."

As Toulon left London that night, he thought of the girl's face again. He smiled as he thought of her

admiration and as he presently put her from his mind and lit a cigarette, another—an older memory came back to him—de Gardeville of course! Extraordinary such a resemblance. He wondered idly if the girl would grow, later on, like her mother or her father, the worthy colonel. Undeniably good-looking the mother, but a hardened woman of the world if ever there was one. Clever too in a way. She knew her world—but—did she know the world outside her "vicious circle"? Toulon had been intrigued, attracted —and repelled. He had been drawn into discussing the manner of French balloting as against English—the more secretive enveloping of the Frenchman's vote before placing it in the box, and the abolition of the old annoying *scrutin de liste.* From that Mrs. Lambeth had expressed some surprising opinions on French politics—and a sudden word of Toulon's had brought some trenchant and biting criticisms which had placed her in his mind as an extreme "irreconcilable." For a moment or two he had wondered why this handsome English society woman should be so anxious to proclaim herself *laïque,* and he had laughingly told her that even the word *laïque* was a clerical one—the Church's word, taken from the Church—and the Church smiled and shrugged its shoulders when it was used, the literal meaning of it being actually a Catholic without being of the clergy—and—here Toulon had smiled though the lady had not—one strictly obedient in religious matters! How she had frozen him, and moved away! Perhaps, after all, it was the English Protestantism which would always prefer pure

paganism to Catholicism. If it had to be nothing—or the Crucifix—why then nothing, and the average Englishman or woman pursed his lips and thought of course of the Spanish Inquisition and all the lurid literature he had been brought up on from childhood, with its picturesque legends colored to suit party purposes. The Crucifix was an improper, revolting, superstitious emblem and the sooner the world forgot it the better. *Eh bien,* Mrs. Lambeth had not said all this, but it was wittily intimated that she thought so as she flicked her jade cigarette holder with an expert finger.

And that girl with the clear eyes—with hidden force behind the quiet reservation of her manner! Toulon suddenly wished he had a son. He would like him to have found a wife like that girl, and then he smiled at his absurd idea. She was probably just a sentimental young "miss" like—well, like most English women are! Probably she would develop into the modern type of her mother or into the sententious worthiness of her father. At any rate, he had thought enough about these people. He folded his arms and glared from beneath the hood of his cloak at a slim clean-shaven young man who had just got in and was calmly opening the window. English, of course. He glanced at the plus fours and the bag of golf sticks pushed unceremoniously on to sundry impedimenta in the rack.

"I hope you don't mind, sir—it's rather stuffy in here."

Quite English, thought Toulon, as he pulled his cloak around him—do your damnedest and apologize—or not—as the case may be, after. His English was

sufficiently good for him to hide a smile when he heard his fellow traveler telling a compatriot in the *couloir* that there had been a "good old fug" in the carriage but that he had treated the Frenchman to a "pinch of hygiene." Toulon remembered a legend, "Manners maketh man," and he thought drowsily as the cold night blast caught his face that what the lack of manners made were often to be found traveling in his beloved country, with passports made out in the English language—geographical idiosyncracies.

CHAPTER II

PARIS was stifling, and Henri Toulon had had to put up with the heat and noise for a whole month in July. It was not to be borne any longer. The work that had brought him and kept him there was finished, and he could get back to his small chalet in the Pyrenees as soon as he liked now. He had even stayed a little longer, to be present at a wedding. The daughter of his old friend Bertron, the fashionable portrait painter of the moment, had married, against every one's wishes, a young deputy who held, politically, everything in marked opposition to Bertron's views. Not that he was particularly pious, the gay Papa Bertron, but Céline had been brought up in a convent, and assisted at mass regularly with her mother every Sunday. Also Papa Bertron had recently painted two Bishops and a Lord Abbot (English), and was just now engaged on a Cardinal, so that his distinguished clientele gave him the comfortable feeling that he at least worked —if he did not live—in the odor of sanctity. But he had begged Toulon, who was Céline's godfather, to try to overcome the girl's obstinacy and give up the man, who had at first refused to be married in a church.

"But think how splendid if I convert him!" Céline

had urged when Henri Toulon spoke of the risk she was running.

"That, my child, is scarcely likely to happen! He is much older than you—his money, his mentality, his political success even are all iron bars against your attempts. It will end, make no doubt of it, in your giving up your duties—and then——"

Toulon shrugged his shoulders, and Céline stared defiantly at him, tears in her pretty eyes.

"You are a horrid, cross *parrain!* Lots of men have been converted by their pious wives," she said.

"And lots of men—and women have lost their faith because they married as you want to—some one who not only has no faith but preaches irreligion."

But Céline's life since she left the convent had not been of a nature to enforce the lessons she had learned there, so she only made a little grimace and remarked airily:

"Well, we shall see—and meanwhile you can buy a pair of white kid gloves—that is if you intend to come to my wedding, you hard-hearted man."

Henri Toulon's face had become a little severe—he was silent for a minute as if trying to remember something.

"About twenty years ago," he suddenly began, and Céline patted his arm gently.

"*Mon Dieu,* thousands of years before I was born," she said, and Toulon smiled. "Yes—in the dark ages before you were born—there was a man—a man I loved. Young, gay, handsome, witty, he had all the gifts——"

"*Tiens,* if I had only known!" murmured Céline, twinkling gayly.

"He had a great soul, a great mind. He could have moved—could have!—he did move men with his exquisite poetry, his writings, his fine, wonderful, magnetic influence. He was an ardent Catholic—I never knew any man who gave out so much of the divine flame which consumed him as Gaston de Gardeville."

The girl was listening now, silently, a little moved herself at the solemnity of Toulon's words. The name, Gaston de Gardeville, too, was romantic, striking, and, being entirely of the bourgeoisie herself, its title of nobility appealed to her.

"Where is he now?" she asked presently, as Toulon remained silent, seeming to be lost in reverie.

"He married——"

"Oh, la la—" broke in Céline, gay again. "Who was she?"

"I don't know who she was—English, I believe. I heard she had no faith; no religion; he gave up his duties at last, and just before he died he sent me the manuscript of the most hopeless, the most tragic book it has ever been my misfortune to review. And yet of a beauty——"

"And he died—like that?" almost whispered the girl, impressed in spite of herself.

"I don't know. I was in the East when it happened—I have heard nothing of him, nor come across any one who ever met his wife, in the last twenty years. To die like that—it seems as if a star fell from heaven. Céline child—I don't want this little star to

have a fall like that." He took her hand, and she smiled up at him.

"No, dear *Parrain,* I'll try to make up for his fall —but I'm going to marry René."

There seemed no more to be said. There were no great depths in Céline—hers was a cheerful, gay, shallow little soul, and Toulon went to the wedding at St. Augustin's and remarked the very correct deportment of the young deputy during the ceremony. It was not a nuptial mass—he had made enough concession and even felt a little abashed that several other senators had accepted Mme. Bertron's invitation and were probably laying up judgment for him later on. But they drank his health in excellent champagne in Papa Bertron's magnificent studio, and admired the paintings, even of His Eminence the Cardinal.

"Anyway, you can't object to the color—" whispered a very advanced radical, with a smile.

"No—it's red all right," muttered the other, laughing, "but that's as far as it goes."

Toulon had finished his packing—in half an hour's time he would hand the key of his room to the concierge, who, with his wife, kept it always ready for him to arrive at any unexpected moment, and in an hour's time he would be in the express, en route to his beloved Pyrenees. He glanced round the room—had he got all he wanted? One more look into the drawers of his bureau—no, nothing he wanted there. He had gone through everything particularly carefully as he hoped there would be nothing to bring him to

Paris again till October. A folded *Carte de France* seemed to be making some papers bulge, and he pulled it out. A little scrap of paper, faded and crumpled, fell from it and Henri Toulon read the last letter that his friend had sent him with the manuscript:

DEAR TOULON: There is a drugging of the soul that is more damnable than a hundred suicides—read this story and pray that I may send you a last chapter of Salvation.

Yrs affect^y^

GASTON DE GARDEVILLE.

Toulon folded the twenty-year-old note, and putting it in his pocketbook, he relocked the drawer.

The last chapter of Salvation! That had always rather puzzled him. Poor Gaston. Toulon remembered having warned him of the literary and journalistic milieu that had come to his aid and swallowed him up as it were. The remarkable story he had sent him had ended in blank desolation: there had been nothing in its ending that could be called "Salvation." Toulon had written to him at once, saying he would read the book on his voyage out to the East, and he had no sooner reached Singapore than he saw the curt notice of de Gardeville's death. That last "chapter of Salvation," then, had never been written? Gaston, for it was evidently his own story, had, in those two short years, belied all the promise of his youth and of those last fruitful ten years of manhood. It was not difficult to read between the lines. A woman's influence, too, more swift and destructive perhaps than the slow poison of *"le grand problème politique,"* had

successfully wrecked the faith of the man whose story he wrote—his own story, Toulon was convinced. The last book he had published a year before his death had been ostentatiously, boastfully un-Catholic and had promptly been put on the Index.

Toulon slowly locked up the bureau again, and wondered as he had so often wondered during the last twenty years what had become of the woman who had attracted a man like Gaston, and been allowed, by such a man, to be the cause of such spiritual—and literary—disaster! "I must find out and vindicate his memory. I have left it too long," he said to himself, and vaguely wondered how he was going to set about it. He had no idea where he should begin, but he supposed Gaston's old publishers might know something; he would write to them, and the next time he was in Paris he would set to work to dig up people who had known him.

CHAPTER III

THE sudden flight to Old Park had not given the housekeeper much time to prepare the place, and for the first few days Chris thoroughly enjoyed going through the handsome old rooms followed by several servants who moved furniture about at her orders, rearranged the old pictures, and placed the various things that she had brought or had had sent from London. Catherine was blissfully happy, and insisted on keeping the old faded, rosebud chintz curtains and covers that Chris wanted to replace in the big mullioned bedroom that had been her own so long ago.

"But I love the fadedness of them—and they remind me of when I was quite little and you used to promise me that one day I should have this room."

Chris had glanced round it with disapproval in her face, in spite of Catherine's ecstasy at the "old-fashionedness" of the beautiful mahogany furniture, the old carved posts of the little four-poster with its chintz valances, the low chintz-covered couch at right angles to the wide old-fashioned fireplace with its iron dogs, across which some logs were sending up cheery flames. An old tallboy glistened in the subdued light, and already Catherine's big wardrobe was being filled with her dresses as the maid unpacked them.

"Well, if you like it, keep it, my dear, but I had thought of doing it up all fresh for you—in rose and biscuit brocade or something cheerful."

Catherine flung her arms impulsively round her mother and kissed her. "It's darling of you, Mother, but rose brocade even with biscuit would paralyze me. You'd find me glued to my bed the very first morning."

Chris gave a little short laugh as she pushed the girl gently away.

"In that case, then, you can do as you like. What have they given you that tallboy for? It's a ridiculous piece of furniture, and the shallow drawers are no use. I banished it to the attic years ago."

"Did you? I simply love it—I like the drawers. Some are sham, and so there are shallow and deep ones. Mason knew I admired it; she said you used to use it, so I asked for it. You don't mind, do you?"

Chris shook her head indifferently as she went up to the piece and pulled out one drawer after another.

"Was there anything in them, did Mason say?" she asked. It was useless trying to reach the top ones, they were too high for her.

"No, all were empty. She said you had cleared them out years ago and made a great bonfire here," laughed Catherine, "but that she had interrupted you and you put everything in an old play-box. What were they? Old love letters and fans and dance programs? Like a real novel, you know."

"What became of them?" repeated Chris, with a puzzled stare at the girl. "Why, what perfect nonsense! Of course I burned them. Mason is getting

softening of the brain. No, they weren't love letters, only rubbish I had no use for."

Mrs. Lambeth wandered about the room for a few minutes and stopped before the long glass to smooth her hair.

"London at least gives one distractions," she said suddenly, and continued to stare at her handsome reflection morosely.

The maid had discreetly left the room, and Catherine, who was arranging books on some shelves, turned to look at her mother. Surely she was not beginning to repent already?

"But we can have glorious times here, Mother, and you love hunting, and the people all round will be delighted to see you again; and you said you wanted to rest——"

"Rest! oh, rubbish! I shall never rest. I'm not the sort who rests! Who can rest from one's self!" She gave a little hard laugh, and, picking up some keys she had dropped, she detached two and put them on the table.

"These belong to the tallboy—they are marked one and two. One locks and two unlocks. You are sure they are empty?"

"Quite sure. Mason has put lavender bags in each of them."

"Well, we must fill the house with visitors soon—the shooting is good, and before the winter we'll get some new hunters over from Ireland. That is, if I'm not bored before then."

The door shut noisily behind her and Catherine con-

tinued to arrange her books, but with an abstracted and slightly troubled air.

What a life without plan or meaning theirs seemed to be! She was beginning to hate it with a violence that surprised her. If it only had some end in view, but it had none. Her mother had done the same things ever since she was a girl, and was doing them now with an added zest because of the fear of old age robbing her of any one of them. Why? Why? A sudden vista of the same sort of life for her made Catherine shiver. Even her stepfather, who had natural leanings toward a quiet country life, seemed content to spend his days catering for or submitting to Chris's amusements and entertainment, satisfied, indeed grateful, for her marks of indifferent affection.

She stared dully at her books. Even the ultra-modern school in England, even the very ultra-modern establishment in Paris, had failed to stifle a certain directness of purpose, a clearness of vision, a flame of fine instinct in the girl, that assuredly she had not inherited from her mother. Chris knew nothing of her daughter. All a girl wanted of course, if she were young and pretty, was a "good time," the gayer the better. Admirers—one called them lovers these days—and the wedding that should follow the first or second season need in no sense interfere with these appendages; all this of course was in the day's march for any modern mother. After that—the deluge as far as Chris was concerned! After that, everything was the girl's own affair! After that, if there were real gilt on the gingerbread, *tant mieux!* If there were

none, or it came off, *tant pis!* It was her affair. Chris belonged to that order of authority, made famous long ago by a certain governor, which washes its hands of responsibility and salves its conscience in repeating the shibboleth:

Ego innocens—vos videritis—I am innocent—see thou to it.

It had been slowly dawning upon Catherine, in this exciting, breathless year of emancipation, that there was a vague sense of uneasiness in living without rule or authority. Chris gave her the "good time" due to a young débutante daughter, and expected docility in return, but the only rules of life she had were "eat, drink, and be merry," in the most modern fashion. The time came when it would be all over, so make the most of life! If they had stayed on in London what would have become of her? She supposed she would have continued to follow the program that her mother made and changed every day, until she accepted one of the several men Chris had suggested might be most likely to provide the "good time" in perpetuity. Oh, no—she did not want to marry for a long time yet, and much as she liked some of her partners, when it came to loving a man sufficiently to give herself into his keeping—there was something, something she scarcely knew how to define, that he must *have,* that he must *be,* also something that he must expect, and find, in her. But whatever it was it had no name yet —she tried to find one. Not religion—no, she felt sure it was not that. Religion as she had seen it practiced since her return to England seemed some-

thing like a pious insurance society—you subscribed a certain amount of form with the object of gaining indulgence later on. No! And yet at that pension in Paris she had known two girls, the two she had really loved, who were different from anyone she had ever met. Of the twelve girls in the house, they were the only Catholic ones, and it was with difficulty a maid could be found to escort them to mass on Sundays. Catherine had been specially labeled by her mother Protestant, though she had added that, as the girl had not been in the habit of attending any church, the less she had to do with them the better. Mademoiselle Maudon fully agreed: on the contrary while giving no instruction on the subject, she trusted that the enlightened influence that her dear young charges met with in her home would weaken any susceptibility to such misplaced sentiment. The other girls were as frankly pagan as Catherine herself, and she remembered very distinctly the first time she had discovered a "new instrument," as she had called it, in Marie Delange, and Thérèse d'Ayzac.

Marie had just been told that a beloved brother had died, in Algiers. Catherine had knocked gently at the door of the room that Thérèse and Marie shared, and thinking she heard *"Entrez,"* she opened the door. At first Catherine thought they were kneeling to pack Marie's box, but as the two girls got up from their knees and turned to her, she saw that the little low table held a crucifix. She had flung her arms round Marie, murmuring, "Oh, you poor dear—how perfectly dreadful—and to be so far away!" And her

little wonder at Marie's tearful smiles—and her—"But he will be nearer me now—and he had such an immense love I am not surprised he could not stay here on earth." She had even laughed a little and Catherine had asked her, many days later, what she had meant by the "immense love." She was told that her brother was a priest. A priest! Catherine was a little shocked in the depth of her mind. She wondered if Mademoiselle Maudon knew. Then she was told a little of what his life of sacrifice and service had been, and sometimes Thérèse had spoken of the love of sacrifice, the love of suffering—the "mystery of love." And then she read something in an earlier book of Toulon's which set her marveling that there was a religion that did not set up happiness as the end of life, but something that exceeded it. That sacrifice—for the loved one—*is* love. Yes, but there must be a loved one! Thérèse and Marie had both left Paris very soon after, and Catherine had gone to their room the last night to say good-by. But a maid had been there—perhaps by order of Mademoiselle, and it was only a whispered remark that Marie had given her.

"Open your eyes, Catherine! Don't let second bests content you!"

Well, they were far from contenting her, but what else offered? Even Toulon's books had been confiscated by Mademoiselle Maudon, with the surprised rebuke, "Your intelligence, Catherine, will find nothing worthy of it in these books. He writes to uphold a decadent superstition which is declining rapidly."

What a ring of contradictions. It was like four people with crossed hands whirling in a kind of "ring a ring o' roses!" One the Christian force—its opposite the unbelieving force—the third and fourth being seconds to each—and each pulling, pulling, till "we all tumble down"! "But no," said Catherine firmly as she turned the lights out, "the thing I want—oh, what is it, and how shall I find it?—but whatever it is called, the thing I mean to find is something that will *never* tumble down—that will be eternal—that's Henri Toulon's word."

No, possibly it was not religion she wanted to find in the man she would marry—and yet the result of her reading in the last three years had made her divide men into two classes, those who were nearest the "Toulon type," built on the immovable foundation of a beautiful but of course mistaken faith, the other, the type that—well, was just the modern type with no vision, no faith, no morals except those set by fashion. She had once or twice wondered why so few of the former class existed, but as she lived longer in her mother's world she began to understand that it was on "beautiful if mistaken foundations," that history had built and wrought and fashioned, and that the visionless type was a mushroom growth that danced blindly to the tuneless fiddling of a worse despot than Nero. "Mistaken? I wonder! A man like Toulon doesn't build on sand," she said slowly as she turned her head on the pillow and stared into darkness.

CHAPTER IV

"But I had heard none of these exciting events. You are quite up-to-date! Not at all behind the times!"

Chris struck a match slowly and smiled. After all, the country was not so dull as she had expected. The ample lady who had come to call on her, Lady Morson, was the nearest neighbor to Old Park, and had been one of the first to welcome the Lambeths back. But her family motto ought to have been like that of the mongoose in the *Jungle Book,* "run and find out." She was consumed with curiosity about the Lambeths: at their seemingly sudden flight from London: at their evident intention to make Old Park their headquarters for some time. Of course every one in the county knew that Mrs. Lambeth was a very popular hostess in a very smart and—rapid—set in London. Lady Morson was a great chronicler of history—or at any rate of legends, and as her age and active memory, together with a caustic tongue, gave her a certain license, she was a woman to be reckoned with. But one listened to her stories and added one's little grain of salt to them. "I think it's a pity they should have come to the Manor—but I hear it's going to be filled with guests for the Hunt Ball, and

the Carmichaels only live for hunting. He was M.F.H. for some years, you know, and may be again."

"But when I heard of them last, surely Sir Arthur Boston was Master?"

"Yes—but he had the grace to resign when his case came on. Major Rogers succeeded. But I'm sorry to say Sir Arthur is going to hunt this season. What do you think of that? Mr. Carmichael with Sir Arthur's wife, Sir Arthur with Mrs. Carmichael!"

Chris lay back in her big chair and laughed shrilly. "Why not—all of them are married quite respectably now. What's the use of English law if we don't uphold it? I shall give a dinner as soon as possible, and invite them. Do I send in Sir Arthur with the *ci-devant* Lady Boston, and Carmichael with his late lamented? How amusing, you really are up to date!"

Her laughter had attracted a little group from the other end of the long drawing-room. Colonel Lambeth had been discussing with another man a road map, which they had opened on a chair-back. On the chair itself Catherine half knelt as she held the corners; and a girl stood beside her who was evidently Mr. Maynard's daughter. They all turned, smiling, as Chris's laughter reached them, and Mr. Maynard, delighted to have Old Park opened again and to renew his friendship with Colonel Lambeth, thought what a great advantage it would be for his motherless daughter to have this charming hostess in the neighborhood.

Chris had got up from her chair, as Lady Morson with an effort rose from the low couch on which she was sitting.

"But you really mustn't go yet. I want to hear more about all these neighbors of mine. Mr. Maynard, come to my aid and persuade Lady Morson to sit down again. I am just beginning to be 'put wise' about the Carmichael-Boston ménages. So amusing."

This time Chris's peal of laughter only raised a slightly embarrassed smile on the men's faces. Colonel Lambeth was so well used to hearing every subject discussed before Catherine that he was not so disturbed as Mr. Maynard, who had stiffened visibly.

"You must forgive us for trying to forget what has been a very unfortunate and unsavory history," he said, a little pompously, and Lady Morson, raising her eyes as far toward heaven as the ceiling of the room would permit her, murmured with unction:

"Unsavory indeed! Deplorable! But things are settling down and the Carmichaels intend to bring quite a large house party to the Hunt Ball—though I did hear there would be many absentees on their account."

"How ridiculous—they will be the attraction, on the contrary! Besides, they're as much married now as we are, so why worry?—Do you hunt, Miss Maynard? You look as if you ought to." Chris smiled graciously at the girl, a tall rather lanky young woman with a pink and white complexion. She glanced at her father a little apprehensively as she spoke:

"I don't hunt often—just by luck now and then, and with the Maddox."

"The Maddox!" repeated Chris. "But why go so far afield when there's such a good pack here?—and such distinguished people too," she laughed.

It was Lady Morson who came to the Maynards' rescue. She tapped Chris's hand with her lorgnette.

"My dear lady, you know! We may be up to date in our scandals; so much so in fact that they *aren't* scandals, but only amusing incidents. But there is still a remnant of the faithful who draw lines, people with young daughters, who—well, simply, who don't hunt with that pack, in any sense of the word."

The ample lady smiled, and vaguely Catherine felt she had been brave to speak like that. So did Mr. Maynard. But Chris's eyes had become suddenly hard, though she smiled as she glanced at the large lady. How dare she try to administer rebuke or advice or warning to her—to her, Chris, of all people!

She turned laughingly to Mr. Maynard, who was holding out his hand to say good-by.

"After all, you are still a little archaic! But we all belong to 'that pack,' don't we, these days?"

It was a question, and she expected, evidently, an answer as she stood there, the incarnation of the modern woman, with her scarlet lips and sleek head. Maynard was privately thinking that, after all, she was not going to be the great advantage for his motherless daughter that he had at first hoped.

"Oh, you'll find we have many old-fashioned notions down here. The old rector used to hunt in his younger days, and of course owes his living to Sir Arthur, so his sermons are cautious—but Father Melford, I hear, denounces us all and doesn't mince matters."

It was Lady Morson who spoke, vainly trying to button her glove over her chubby wrist.

"Father Melford—who is he?" The words shot

out and again Chris's eyes held that hard expression that she scarcely attempted to veil this time.

"He has been here some years now. There is a small Catholic church between the villages of Manor Verdon and Market Boston, which, as you perhaps remember, are close together. A very pleasant man."

A curious expression of intense bitterness had come into Chris's face. Catherine had seen it once before —curiously enough, when she had spoken of Toulon being Catholic.

"Really—there is no getting away from these people! However, we shall have no use for either of them. Good-by, Mr. Maynard—bring your girl over often—often. Miss Maynard," she repeated with a charming smile as she turned to the lanky Barbara, "you must take pity on Catherine who has no young people here." This with a little gentle laugh as Catherine exclaimed, "And Mother the youngest of us all!"

When Colonel Lambeth and Catherine came back to the room a few minutes later, after seeing all their visitors off, they found Chris smoking furiously, half sitting, half lying on a great cushioned couch. They almost started at the sound of her voice, as, suddenly throwing her cigarette into the fire, she exclaimed violently,

"This priest who dares to 'denounce' us, forsooth! Well, he shall have some reason for his denunciations."

John Lambeth glanced at her quickly. It was years since he had seen her in this mood. She was spoiled, obstinate often, entirely self-centered, but very rarely had he seen her moved to fury—and on

each occasion it had been on the subject of Catholics. Something seemed to suddenly flame up in her that could not be suppressed, and John hated to think of those exhibitions of violence, those unreasonable and exaggerated prejudices which, after all, need not worry her, as they really had nothing to do with any one at Old Park.

"Oh, what does it matter?" he said, in his slow, quiet voice. "We don't come in contact with the man, nor with his people. They are chiefly the Irish servants of some of the houses in the neighborhood. Put the thing out of your mind, my dear."

A bright unusual color had mounted to Chris's cheeks. Her eyes literally flashed with a steely anger as she made an impatient sound, and Catherine, who had never seen her mother like this before and knew nothing of her bitterness on the subject, said gently:

"Why do you dislike them, dear? I simply love those I've met."

Chris sprang up and for a moment John Lambeth thought she was going to strike the girl. Standing close to her, she seized Catherine's arm. "I forbid you to have anything to do with them—you hear me, Catherine—I forbid you!"

There was a sudden silence. Catherine, very pale, with a dignity about her that Chris had never recognized in her before, stood looking down. A curious idea had come to her mind. Perhaps her own father had been Catholic, and she knew it had been an unhappy marriage. No one had told her so, but she felt certain of it. It was a period in her mother's life

not to be spoken of—she was not even to be reminded of it by allowing her daughter her father's name. Poor mother, she must have suffered—but—perhaps—so had her father!

"Do you hear me, Catherine? Don't stand there like a log," Chris repeated sharply.

"Yes, Mother, I hear you. I will remember what you say," she said slowly and, feeling as if she were in a dream, she left the room.

"My dear, I think if one forbids young people any particular thing, it is just that particular thing they will have by hook or by crook."

John struck a match aimlessly and then, finding he had no cigarettes within reach, blew it out again. Chris took no notice of him. Her sudden fury had gone. She looked even a little pathetic as she stood in the same place where Catherine had left her, watching the girl cross the room and disappear through the door. Then she turned wearily to her husband:

"Do you believe in Nemesis, John?"

He was not quick to understand her, but he was always kind and useful—a sort of thick rug on a chilly day.

"I really don't know what you mean, darling. Nemesis has nothing to do with us." He pulled her down on to the big cushioned couch, but she held herself stiffly away from him.

"Not with you—but with me—perhaps," she said in a low voice, then jumping up she laughed.

"This comes of leading the simple life. I'm getting melodramatic."

CHAPTER V

THERE was nothing in the days that followed to mark the little storm in the drawing-room. Chris was busy planning a sunken garden. She wanted to turn the old orangery into a swimming bath; the stables had to be modernized and the chauffeur was very sulky because more was going to be spent on the accommodation for hunters than for his—his—cars!

Catherine saw little of her mother, who was in her happiest mood. Chris saw immense possibilities for entertaining lavishly and originally, but there must be alterations and changes first, and economy was not her strong point, except when it was going to give her personally no kudos, no particular thrills. She was delighted to find that her reputation had gone before her and that every one—or nearly every one—of those who counted had called on her. Whether from curiosity or friendliness did not in the least matter to Chris—it opened prospects of gayety and entertainment—movement—relieved her of the "Compleat Husband" as she called John to his face now and then, which flattered him, though she had no intention of flattery, and relieved her, too, of the constant companionship of Catherine. Chris liked the girl's warm admiration: she thought, and said in the most charming way, that Chris was fascinating; that her taste was perfect, etc.

Yes, there were points about the girl, and Chris recognized that Catherine had excellent taste herself, when expressed by such filial admiration. Also she was pretty, with a quiet distinguished air about her that Chris had never had, and which certainly never came from the Graham side. Fortunately Mrs. Lambeth did not hear the remarks of visitors as they drove away.

"Interesting woman that—amusing, very. The girl's going to be a beauty, by Jove."

"H-m-m—I didn't think Mrs. Lambeth so good looking as I'd heard she was."

"That Miss Lambeth is like a Greuze—but a Greuze with a backbone. Not a bit like either her father or her mother."

Even Mrs. Carmichael, the *ci-devant* Lady Boston as Chris had called her, hearing that Mrs. Lambeth expected her, came over one day. Chris, without unduly signalizing the lady, had made her a charming welcome which she had not given to all the other visitors. Catherine was glad she was not missed when she absented herself often from these visits. She had felt a strong repugnance to Mrs. Carmichael, and Chris had told her afterwards that to be shy and *gauche,* as she had been that afternoon, was the worst possible form of bad breeding.

"I felt simply sick," Catherine had said abruptly, "just as I should if I found some of those Russian bolshevists in the room."

"Really you are quaint; I don't quite follow your idea."

"I think it's the horrible feeling that she represents no law, no rules to be obeyed, except just as her inclinations take her. That seems to me more want of breeding than to be awkward before such a person."

For a moment Chris was too astonished at Catherine's intuition to reply, and the girl had turned to the piano again and was turning over some music when her mother spoke, a little coldly:

"You are too young and too ignorant, Catherine, to judge men and women. When you have lived a little longer in the world you will be more tolerant."

Catherine thought of her mother's words as she rode slowly down the avenue one morning. She was to meet Barbara Maynard at the Old Mill and they were to ride to some old ruins about ten miles off. They were taking lunch with them, and Mr. Maynard had promised to meet them there and come back with them.

"Tolerant when I am older! I won't be tolerant of lawless people. I wonder why I don't like the people Mother does." After all, she thought, as she negotiated a gate with her crop, if rules of the road are just made to be laughed at, I can gallop and canter all over this highroad and injure anybody or get run over twenty times—and paying fines won't bring the victims back to life.

She wondered for a moment what fines life imposed on morally lawless people. Conscience? But no—conscience supposed at least a moral standard, and from what Catherine had seen and heard of the Carmichael-Boston type, moral standards simply didn't

exist. She thought at least race, breeding, birth, or education could take the place of conscience, but with an innocent cynicism that her short experience had given her, she concluded that this failed because of heredity. It must be in the blood; lawlessness, disdain of restraint, contempt of rule—*for themselves*. Curious, thought the girl as she cantered along the grassy side of the road, under the leafless trees that bordered it, curious, they are just common thieves, these men and women who break laws for what they call love. And the small Carmichael at Eton and Johnny Boston in the nursery—how soon will they find out that they belong to the upper-ten bolshevists, and that law or breeding count for nothing—that *nothing* counts except to get what you want. A motor hooted behind her suddenly, and flew past without any slackening of speed, and for a few minutes Catherine had all she could do to control her horse.

"Beasts!" she said, as she at last reined him in from the wild gallop. "There goes another lawbreaker." And as a watery, wintry sun suddenly gleamed on the gray landscape, Catherine raised her crop in a sort of salute, and half laughing to herself, half seriously she cried:

"Here and now, Monseigneur le Soleil, who keeps the law and follows rules, I swear I'll do the same."

She felt suddenly gay and light-hearted and, passing a woman at the door of a little cottage, she gave a friendly smile.

"There's no short cut to Abbey Mill, is there?" she asked, pulling up.

"No, Miss—but it's not so far—only a matter of a mile or two. It's just this side of Manor Verdon —you can't miss it."

Suddenly Catherine noticed that the woman had been crying; that even now she was doing her best evidently to control herself. For a moment she thought she had better continue her way, and then, unexpectedly the woman who had turned to go in again, came back hurriedly.

"Oh, Miss—I do ask your pardon but I'm in such trouble," she began, and Catherine wondered how much money she had in her pocket—not much she was sure. She supposed of course it was a trouble that could be appeased by alms.

"I am sorry—is there anything I can do?" she said gently.

"It's my son—he's dying—the doctor can do no more for him—but, Miss—I've no one to send to fetch Father Melford. You pass his door, would you, Miss —oh, would you, Miss, just leave word that Larry Johnson is dying and will he come at once?"

Catherine bent down and held her hand out and the woman came nearer.

"Of course I will—oh, I am so sorry for you—but is there nothing else, and won't it worry him to see anyone just now?" A puzzled look came into the woman's face.

"Worry him, Miss? To see the priest? And when he's dying? Oh, Miss, you'll hurry, won't you, and I'll pray for you always, I'm that grateful."

Without another word Catherine shook her rein

and it seemed to the woman that the horse had bolted, so quickly had she disappeared. How stupid, thought Catherine, not to have asked for more directions as to how to find the priest, but she could ask some one —she supposed he would be known. And then she remembered having heard that this new church was between the villages of Manor Verdon and Market Boston, close to the Abbey Mill where she was to meet Barbara. A few minutes more and she was at the corner of the crossroads. No mistaking the little white stone Catholic church, with a large crucifix in the middle of the enclosed ground beside it. Evidently the ugly little red-brick house at the side was where the priest lived. Some nursery gardens were beyond it, and beyond that began the old broad high street of Market Boston, with its fine fifteenth-century church towering over everything.

There seemed to be nobody about—she must dismount. Leading Bobby up to the church gate which seemed to be the only thing she could tie him to, she was just making the reins fast when a voice said, "I think we can find a better place than that to tie him up to. Were you going into the church or did you want to see me?"

It was the first time Catherine had ever spoken to a priest. She stood there with the reins in her hands, one hand on the horse's shoulder, and for a fraction of a minute she suddenly remembered her mother's fury. "You hear me, Catherine, I forbid you."

An elderly gray-haired man in a dusty, shabby cassock, Father Melford, stood looking with a twinkle

in his eyes at the masterly way she had barred the church gate.

"No, I don't want to go in, thank you. Is it—are you Father Melford?"

"I am." Father Melford's Irish blood in him was admiring the horse, and he stepped back to get a better view of him.

"I was to ask you if you would go to see a man who is dying—Larry Johnson." Catherine thought he was just going to stoop down to feel the horse's hocks, but as she spoke he stood erect.

"What's that—Larry Johnson dying? He's taken a turn for the worse then? I must go at once."

Then, with a smile that lit up his rugged face, he said gently, "And you, young lady, how came you on this errand of mercy?"

"I happened to be passing and she had no one to send, so I was glad to be of use."

Father Melford held out his hand, and Catherine put her little gauntleted one into his big grasp.

"God reward you for your act of charity! Now, I see you want to get on. Can I mount you?" He offered his hand again, this time for her foot, but she laughingly said she could manage, and as Bobby stood quietly, she sprang lightly into the saddle.

"And may I know who it is who tied up my church gate?" said Father Melford, smiling up at her.

"I'm called Catherine Lambeth," she smiled back again, suddenly feeling at ease, "and I didn't tie it up. We just hitched ourselves to it as it was the only sort of anchorage I could find."

"And you were quite right, my child. Are you by any chance one of my flock?"

"Oh, no." Catherine shook her head gently—Bobby wanted to get off and she could see Barbara Maynard in the distance on her gray pony.

"Ah—I thought perhaps you were. Well, young lady, come and find anchorage again here as soon as you like—inside the gates next time!" He smiled, and with a wave of his hand to which Catherine responded, he turned back to the presbytery.

Catherine rather liked the lanky Barbara who seemed delighted to have found a companion for her rides, and the two girls, led by Barbara, who knew the country, had made a number of excursions together. The Abbey ruins were reached in less than an hour, and leaving their horses at a little inn near, they made their way to what had been the old cloisters.

"Let's make for the old church, it's in what sun there is and we can eat our sandwiches there—I'm famished," said Barbara. Catherine stared up at the delicate tracery of the old windows that were slowly falling to pieces.

"I suppose just here was where the high altar was," she said, standing on what was only a grassy mound.

"Yes—I've got the history of it somewhere—it was one of the prizes of the Reformation—very rich and of course very corrupt." Barbara did credit to her education and was quite disturbed when Catherine said:

"Don't let's eat our lunch here."

"Why not?—but just as you like; do you think it too chilly to sit on these stones?"

"No—it's not that—but we can't eat here even if it is a ruin—it's been—something sacred."

Barbara nodded—and they found a fallen tree to sit on.

"I wonder, Catherine—you said I might call you Catherine, didn't you?—I wonder what sort of men those monks really were who lived here—they must have hated being turned out."

Catherine was thinking of something she had once read in one of Toulon's books—it was a quotation. Lately it had been coming often to her mind.

"You read French, don't you, Barbara? I've seen heaps of novels in your room, so I'll hand you on something that sometimes makes me wish I'd been brought up in any sort of religion rather than none. *'À mon avis, ceux qui n'ont pas au moins le tourment religieux ignorent la moitié de la vie, et la plus belle, la moitié de la pitié.'* "

Barbara munched her sandwich, revolving in her mind that the only *"tourment religieux"* she had ever experienced was when, at a very high-church school, she had endured pangs of hunger on Fridays, and gone, fasting, to the weekly communion. She had certainly never done it since.

"That's written by a man who has religion in his blood—who's inherited it, I expect. I could quote too," Barbara's voice was raised a little, "something about the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge." She jumped up and brushed some crumbs off her coat, and Catherine looked up at her.

"You know, Barbara, I don't mean to ignore *'la*

moitié de la vie.' There's something—in my blood perhaps, perhaps inherited—that's not ever going to let me be just content with anything less than *la plus belle.*"

"Well, we can make a great adventure of life if we're going treasure hunting. The thing is, is it worth while? I'm hypnotized by life into being more or less content with my lot."

"I'm not," said Catherine. "There's something about life—and death, that even poor Larry Johnson's mother knew that I don't. She had something in her that I haven't got—but that I mean to get."

Barbara stared.

"Who is Larry Johnson's mother?"

Catherine smiled at the abrupt question.

"She's a poor woman whose only son is dying—a boy who in the Catholic church is entitled to the same offices—the same 'send off' as a Catholic king. It seems to me, you know, Barbara, from what I've read and from the very few Catholics I've met, that no matter what his condition, a Catholic is a 'varsity man'—that strikes me first of all—the Church is a sort of university—there's a cachet about a Catholic —a sort of spiritual assurance." She sat pulling up bits of grass, lost in her thoughts, till Barbara yawned suddenly.

"I only know fairly intimately one Catholic, and I was rather hoping I could get him to my way of thinking," she said, but Catherine was not listening.

CHAPTER VI

HENRI TOULON had bought, some ten or fifteen years ago, a little chalet in the Pyrenees, a cottage that was almost Basque under its quaint roof of thatch, with its undulating frills and deep eaves. It stood a little away from the village of Gérac, on a slope of the hills overlooking the mountain gorge and the stream that came rushing in cascades and torrents from the high peaks. A gayly painted balcony surrounded the upper story, and old Solange, his housekeeper, who loved flowers, had cultivated and tended her roses and geraniums to such a degree that he had exclaimed on arriving:

"But to-day isn't Corpus Christi! What! They are all growing! Solange, you deserve the *legion d'honneur!*"

He had done a great deal of work in the last few weeks down here, and now the first frosts and wintry sunshine had tempted him to put away his books and papers. So, beret on head, shouldering an old knapsack, and taking his strong pointed stick, he prepared to start off for a long tramp. Solange, in her long black capuchon, coming from mass, met him at the gate.

"I must go for a long tramp—I've taken what I

could find in the larder, but I've left you plenty," he said, smiling.

It was one of Monsieur's ways, that was, to go off suddenly on these long excursions and think nothing of missing the good soup, and that roast chicken she had prepared, and the salad, and the little fried *beignets!* Solange thought it worth while to enumerate the good things Monsieur would miss, and Toulon gave an amused groan.

"If you'd told me last night I might have waited till to-morrow, but then I should certainly have had a distraction at mass. By the way, I was just behind you, Solange, and you weren't listening to the sermon."

The old woman smiled.

"Well, I was and I wasn't, Monsieur. Jeanne Clavé was there. It's many years since I've seen her."

"Oh," Toulon remarked a little absently, "who is Jeanne Clavé?"

"Who is Jeanne Clavé? Why, has Monsieur forgotten she was housekeeper with Monsieur *le Curé* at Caussac when the fever raged many years ago—and she nursed the whole village, and afterward the *Préfet* paid a special visit to thank her."

Yes, Toulon admitted that he had forgotten her—in fact it was the first time he had heard of her prowess. Caussac—it was a good point to make for to-day—over the Pic du Gris, rather rough going, but it was a perfect day for it—and a good little inn where he would get food and drink and a bed. It was years since he had been there. "Ah—there's no one like a good Frenchwoman," he said as he started off; and

Solange clacked her tongue as she replied naïvely, "Well naturally, of course not."

Toulon descended the little rocky path that led from the cottage to the rough road. He had been down it once already to mass, and had found it rather slippery with the early frost. When Solange went to the fortnightly market at Sauvin, she negotiated the whole road, rocky path included, seated with dignity and ease on a handsome high-stepping Pyrenean donkey, which neither slackened nor increased its steady pace in the face of any difficulty. It was a different matter if you talked reasonably to him. All Solange contributed to the going were words of encouragement and caution—uttered in the rather harsh patois of the district, *"Haï! Haï! Shox!"* which being interpreted meant, "Get along; now, now, mind your steps! Stop!"

He passed the old church, over the door of which, in a well-guarded little frame, hung the old chain and padlock which had closed it through the Revolution. There were a few people in Gérac who would have been very content to see it padlocked again. The mayor was one, but being also the only grocer and general dealer in the village, he considered that a policy of "masterly inaction" was the wisest plan. The schoolmaster was another. Poor man, it had soured his temper to find that this little insignificant village was so solidly Catholic and pious. He had come to Gérac burning with free-masonic zeal, to train the young to grow up independent, pitying their superstitious practices and beliefs, and it was the children who

pitied him and regarded him as a poor heathen sent by *le bon Dieu* to be converted in their village

Being Sunday morning, most of the men of Gérac were visible in their black corduroys and big-brimmed hats, smoking, silent for the most part—in little groups. Toulon spoke to some of them as he passed. There was Jean Baptiste, a fine tall man, than whom there was no better shepherd of sheep on the whole range of the Pyrenees. If he had any preference among the woolly beasts he guarded on the high slopes during the hot weather, it was for those of a certain flock marked with a large blue M. They belonged to a convent many miles off, in a village where dwelt a maid— Her name too was Marie, as was the M on the sheep for pious guarding, as the *aumonier* of the convent had fitly pointed out when he had blessed the little flock on the morning of their departure, and sprinkled each one with holy water.

And there was old Alphonse, very rickety in his legs, very bent with much toil, cackling in senile chuckles at Monsieur's greeting, and Michel, the shock-headed Swede who never wore a hat because he could never find one big enough. Michel was requisitioned when there were trees to be felled, or great weights to be moved. He ought to have been called Samson—there was the strength of one of his own oxen in his great frame that he moved so slowly, almost cautiously. Perhaps his gray negro hair had something to do with it.

Toulon was soon out of the village, climbing the steep road that he would presently leave to follow the little track up over the peak that separated Gérac

from Caussac. It was well past midday when he reached the summit. He was glad to slip that bag off his back and lie down on the short cropped grass, though he rested on his elbow, unable to take his eyes from that superb view. God! was it any miracle that France had had so many visits from the Blessed Damosel! He thought it would have been a miracle if she hadn't come! Always she and her Son had loved mountains! His eyes took in the mighty towers and peaks of the Pyrenees that rose and spread themselves beyond him, some below, some above, some hidden in soft fleecy clouds, others standing out grim and menacing against the blue sky. Miles down below him woods and forests clothed the deep ravines through which, like a faint silver ribbon, the river ran fed by the snows above. There was no more glorious view in France. Toulon seemed to be suspended between heaven and earth. To the south the country seemed to stretch to the edge of the world, and the silence of eternity rested over everything. Not even a sheep bell broke the serene stillness, though far below, he could see the little specks and knew they were grazing on the lower slopes.

Ah, this was good. He would like to serve a mass up on this grassy peak; he would like to kneel here, assisting with all his soul in the greatest act of love and adoration that a man can offer his Maker. He smiled at the idea of fat little Father Leroy trying to climb the Pic du Gris, and presently, opening his knapsack, he fell to work on the bread and cheese he had taken from the larder.

When he entered Caussac a few hours later it

seemed like a city of the dead. It was a little place famed for its waters, but with the shortest "season" of any in the Pyrenees. The few hotels were closed. Houses were closed. Shops, such as they were, hermetically sealed. A forlorn little bandstand stood in the center of a modest garden, the gate of which was padlocked—as if anyone could possibly have the desire to enter such a melancholy domain!—and seemed to be waiting for the violins and trombones of a departed life.

Toulon eyed it all with disfavor. He hated places with seasons, but to-morrow he would leave Caussac behind him and push on into the wilds again. He would go into the church for a moment, and then find his little modest inn that was always open, where they made good omelets in season and out of season. As he walked through the small churchyard, he stopped to read some of the names on the crosses. Curious so many of them had the same date, July, 19—, ah, yes—it was the time Solange had spoken of—when fever had carried off so many. Poor things! He was just turning to go into the church when a modest marble cross, half-hidden by a rosebush, caught his eye. He stopped suddenly. But this was amazing! Had Gaston been within a day's march these last fifteen years, and he had never known! He pushed the branches on one side and read:

GASTON DE GARDEVILLE
Aged 30
July 20, 19—
Jésus, miséricorde!

Toulon read the simple words over and over again as if to make sure he was not mistaken, and then suddnly the remembrance of the man, almost boy he was, with his gay, debonair manner, his ardent faith, his ready wit, and his rare literary gifts, rose before him. He was so *chevaleresque,* so generous, not in money simply, because he never had any, but generous in giving himself wherever his gifts could be of use. And then—what a mystery! What had happened? But the sound of door shutting made him turn. Evidently the Curé leaving the church—he must find out all he could about Gaston, but he must first say a *de Profundis* for him. He caught up the elderly priest as he was entering the gate of the presbytery. Visitors were rare once the short season was over, and Father Abadie had walked very slowly, feeling that this distinguished-looking visitor would certainly find his way to the presbytery. It had been a Catholic he was sure, and no foreign tourist who had entered the little churchyard, cap in hand; so he turned smiling as Toulon spoke:

"I would be very grateful, Monsieur le Curé, if you would allow me to ask you some questions about——"

"But yes, but yes, Monsieur, only give yourself the trouble to enter. I shall be glad to answer any question I can, but I beg you to enter."

It was a prim cold little parlor that Toulon was ushered into, with faded green velvet chairs placed all round the room till they met again beside a large stiff armchair. A polished table in the middle of the room held a discreet blotter and an inkstand, whose ink

had not survived the "season"—neither had the pen. Toulon sat down, not in the armchair that the good Father vainly tried to indicate, but in the first that came to hand. He was glad to sit down at last. While the Curé opened the closed shutters to let in the light, and apologized for causing a draft, Toulon's eyes glanced round the room. Perhaps de Gardeville had sat in this impossible "salon," and regarded the same impossible pictures. There was a dreadful one of the souls in Purgatory over the mantelpiece that almost amused him, until he thought one of the figures looked most extraordinarily like himself, which made him stop wanting to smile. At last the Curé sat down and then Toulon began to explain that he was on a little walking tour, and that accident—or chance—or rather Providence, yes, exactly—had led him to discover the grave of a man he had known well at one period of his life, many years ago.

That grave of Gaston de Gardeville—could the Curé tell him anything about his death—about the man at all?

"De Gardeville—ah yes, that is the cross the people here erected over his grave, in gratitude for his noble services."

"What were those services?" asked Toulon.

"Monsieur, I can tell you very little. I have only been here a few years. My predecessor, who was here through the fever epidemic, is now almost in his second childhood, but he has a wonderful memory at times. Monsieur de Gardeville and his wife, I believe I have heard, were here for the waters when the fever

broke out. All the visitors fled, and—but I am the last person to tell you the story, for it is only hearsay on my part."

"I beg you will tell me all you have heard, Father; it means a great deal to the memory of the man."

The Curé adjusted his spectacles. Toulon looked dusty and hot and disheveled after his long walk, but there was an air of good faith and a look of such decided distinction about him that the priest felt it was not idle curiosity.

"I heard that the lady, his wife, was one of the first to leave in the general panic, but I know no more than the mere fact that he devoted himself to nursing the sick and that he took the fever himself and died."

"Do you know in what condition he died, Father—I heard that he had given up his religious duties and become even aggressive?"

Father Abadie shook his head and made a little gesture with his hands.

"Ah, that I cannot tell you, Monsieur, but I have no reason to suppose otherwise than that he died in the best disposition. It is true, the widow declined to have any cross on his grave—she wrote to the curé, I believe, that such a sign would be repugnant to both Monsieur de Gardeville and to herself, but she never came, and after some years it was the people here who put the cross up."

Toulon rose from his chair, a troubled expression on his face. How was he to find out all the details, as he wanted to? The Curé spoke again; he had remembered some one who might be useful.

"There is a good woman in the village who nursed him—she would tell you everything—but, let me see, I believe she has gone to see her cousin at Gérac."

"Gérac? I have come from there to-day. What is her name?"

"Her name—quite a famous one here. She will have a statue one day, I expect, the people honor her so. Even the Préfet paid her a special visit—" The good father laughed a little, rubbing his hands.

The Préfet paid her a visit! Where had he heard these words already—was it to-day?

"Her name?"—he repeated and searched his memory for what Solange had told him about some woman.

"Ah yes, her name—why, Jeanne Clavé."

Then he must get back to Gérac at once, unless he could telephone from the little post office to some one in Gérac, to find out and let him know how long Jeanne Clavé was to remain there. But there was no telephone to be found in working order till next day, when Toulon dispatched a message to Solange, telling her to beg Jeanne Clavé to remain in Gérac till his return in a day or two, as he had a matter of importance to consult her about. He worded it, "to consult her," to appease the village, for of course his telegram would be discussed from one end of the commune to the other. Jeanne was regarded with pride in Caussac, and with envy in Gérac. She was supposed to be more of an authority on medical matters than the doctor himself, but that might well be, as his two eternal remedies were purgatives and *picqures*—the new hypodermic injection for any and every ill of the

flesh, or at least such flesh as was left after the régime of purgatives. And not only in medical lore was Jeanne a shining light, but the compliments of Monsieur le Préfet, eighteen years ago, had endowed her, in the eyes of her neighbors, with a political importance which placed her in a rank with deputies and "such like." It was only Jeanne's modesty and strong piety that made her quite one of themselves. If she did not "hear confessions" she was responsible for many that the good Curé heard; there were many "lame dogs" she had helped, many straying sheep, on the verge of becoming extremely black, whose weaknesses Jeanne had fathomed and whom she had shepherded till they consented to return to their duties.

So only when Toulon got the message, "Jeanne here till next Sunday," did he continue his long tramp, promising himself to be back in Gérac in a day or two.

CHAPTER VII

MR. MAYNARD had been rather late arriving at the ruins, and had found the girls already mounted and prepared to return. They were going to take Catherine as far as the gates of Old Park, and would ride back by a shorter road to their own place. Mr. Maynard had been very full of a meeting he had had with some old friends who had been abroad, and who were now installed not far away—old Squire Lanescourt and his wife, Lady Mary. They had come back from the Riviera where they had gone after helping Roger, the eldest son, in his constituency: there had been a by-election and he had been successful. This last bit of information was for Catherine, who could not be supposed to know local news. Also, Ralph, the second son, was back from—somewhere—Catherine did not hear where, and was not greatly interested. She thought for a moment that Barbara seemed very pleased at the news, but they were getting near Larry Johnson's cottage and she was wondering how she could explain what she meant to do. There was no one at the cottage door this time. It was shut. It was not dark yet, just dusk, but upstairs she could see there was a light behind the drawn blind.

"Mr. Maynard, Barbara, do you mind if I just stop

a moment to ask how some one is—here. He was ill—" Before they could say anything, she had slid off her horse, and Mr. Maynard, laughing at her hurry, had dismounted and come round to hold Bobby.

Catherine had tapped softly, and after what seemed several minutes the door was opened by a woman, a neighbor evidently, not the woman of the morning. And she was told that Larry had died early in the afternoon.

"Oh—" murmured Catherine impulsively, "let me tell his poor mother how grieved I am."

It had been no intention of hers to go in—she imagined the poor mother sitting in the parlor or the kitchen, wringing her hands and weeping into her apron. Well—she supposed she had gone to bed exhausted with her grief, as she found herself following the woman up the little narrow staircase.

Nothing in the eighteen years of her pleasant, pagan life had prepared her for what she saw when she entered the little bedroom. Just a boy, about her own age, lying asleep, so it seemed, on a big white bed—his hands crossed, holding a rosary. Some one had laid Christmas roses and little strands of ivy on either side of him. A little table with a crucifix and two candles stood near. Catherine noticed what looked like a small glass sugar basin with water in it and a sprig of box—but her eyes, after their first startled look at the bed, fell on the people who were kneeling round it. Such a little cramped space, but there was the mother kneeling, her lips moving. She never raised her eyes as Catherine came in. An old

man knelt beside her, and evidently the woman who had opened the door to her had been kneeling too. What was she to do? She would have whispered a kind word to Larry's mother, but Larry's mother was occupied with Larry's soul and took no notice of her—did not even see her. The woman seemed to expect Catherine to do something, but the girl did not know what it was. She could hear the horses moving about and Mr. Maynard's voice and Barbara laughing. She thought she heard another voice—some one had bicycled up, and another man's voice, in a lower pitch than Mr. Maynard's, was speaking—Barbara's laugh had seemed horribly out of place, hearing it in this little still room. Oh, why had she come upstairs? Why didn't some one speak? How out of place she seemed in her gaitered riding suit, holding her crop, and staring at that white bed. Then, with a little wonder in her eyes, she turned and looked at the crucifix on the table. She knew no prayers—but there was something here that demanded prayer.

"God, listen to my silence!" she whispered, and knelt——

She was always glad that she had knelt before Ralph Lanescourt came quietly into the room. He had to bend his head a little, and as he came in, their eyes met.

Then he took the little twig of box, sprinkled with holy water in the form of a cross the sleeping boy, and knelt down beside Catherine, not conscious that a drop had fallen on her face. When at last she moved to come away, he had to get up to let her pass, and at the same moment the mother rose to her feet. She

came straight to Catherine, "God bless you, Miss—he came in time. Oh, Master Ralph——"

Catherine murmured a few words and crept downstairs. She heard the woman whispering brokenly, and the young man who had looked at her with such a startled regard, talking to the mother in a quiet gentle voice that had a deep note of authority in it.

Mr. Maynard helped her to mount, and it was then that Ralph Lanescourt came out of the cottage. He was a little grave—yet he had eyes that seemed to laugh with some interior *gaieté du cœur*—and he came straight to Catherine and looked up at her as she looked down at him. As Barbara, very bored with such a long waiting, cantered off, she called out, a laughing introduction:

"Catherine—Mr. Lanescourt—Miss Lambeth."

Mr. Maynard, stooping to tighten the girth of his horse, threw in some remarks which no one heard. For Catherine, deeply moved at her first sight of death, at her first prayer, which had been sped into space by the atmosphere of prayer in that little room—for Catherine, life seemed to have begun by the side of death. As she looked into Ralph's grave questioning eyes, she suddenly bent lower, and said softly:

"What did you pray?"

He seemed to be not at all surprised at her strange question—she too then felt they had known each other a long time.

"I prayed first for the repose of his soul—and afterward I—prayed—for something else."

Then a quick smile came into his handsome face.

"Larry was always beater for me when I got any shooting down here—I am very grateful for your kindness. Mary Johnson told me."

She had to let Bobby go—their hands scarcely met, but each of them knew it was not good-by, that they would meet again.

How dim and mysterious the road looked in the dusk! For nearly a mile it was bordered on both sides by high banks thickly wooded, the trees meeting overhead. She and Barbara were a little in advance of Mr. Maynard, who liked a leisurely trot. Bobby had broken into a gentle canter, and Catherine was glad no one wanted to talk. She liked the stillness of this sheltered road—even the sound of the horses' hoofs seemed soothing. There was a sense, for the first time in her life, of going home. Not just going to Old Park, where her mother was, but returning with something in her heart that was going to make home of life now. Then Barbara's voice, lowered confidentially:

"Pity it wasn't Roger—he's such a lamb!"

Catherine smiled to herself in the darkness—not so much at hearing the redoubtable young member of Parliament called by such an engaging name—but at a feeling of happiness that Barbara's interest was evidently not centered on—on—well, on *him!* This one, then, was not Roger—no, she remembered Larry's mother called him Mr. Ralph.

"Tell me about them," she said simply.

"My dear, when people get to know the Lanescourts, they like them immensely; but partly because

they are the only Catholics round here of any standing, partly because of Lady Mary's health, they are considered rather exclusive. People say all sorts of things about them."

"What sort of things?"

How curious he was a Catholic—why should she feel glad? She who had been brought up to avoid Catholics like the plague?

"Well," went on Barbara, glancing over her shoulder to see if her father were sufficiently far away not to hear her, "Lady Mary and the Squire are very pious, and poor Roger—well, simply isn't. I think he sort of broke away from the tradition. You can't expect a young, clever, rising politician who mixes with all the cleverest people to go on believing in the superstitions of the Catholic Church, can you? And then too—perhaps"—her voice hesitated, "perhaps he knows I should be so glad if he could free himself."

Something was surging up in Catherine as she listened to the girl. Something she could not understand or fathom. Why was she almost trembling with this feeling that came to her always when she heard the Catholic Church abused—what was it to her? The only Catholics she had ever come across were Thérèse and Marie Delange—till to-day. But she had read indiscriminately, and always there had been something in her that seemed to "correspond" with the Catholic thought and spirit. Lately she had been trying to summon up courage to ask her stepfather if he would tell her more about her own father, but the moment

had not come. And now again, her heart beating quickly, she was moved with anger because Barbara talked lightly of it. She must know the reason *why* she minded so much!

"Barbara—if you take away a man's religious faith, what do you propose to put in its place?" she asked and, without waiting for an answer, she added quickly:

"Don't—*don't!* I don't understand a bit why, but I do know that if a Catholic gives up his practices and loses his faith, it is the most tragic and terrible thing that can happen. Nothing can ever take its place, I know that, though I'm not a Catholic."

"Really, Catherine, I don't see why! We have quite lovely rituals and ceremonies in our church—good enough for anybody," replied Barbara.

"You don't suppose that a person who has fed at the fountainhead is going to be content with—with—" Catherine hesitated in her flow of eloquence and Barbara suddenly laughed:

"With bottled beer for example? Any brand you like—high, broad, low? I admit that the Establishment is a bit like the Army and Navy Stores or any other stores, but then we are English and independent."

"I am French." No one heard Catherine's little sudden declaration. She wondered at herself for making it, but it was true, she supposed. She remembered that Mademoiselle Maudon had once said to her:

"Don't forget, Catherine, that you are a Frenchwoman by birth, and therefore breeding and *savoir*

faire are your natural inheritance." Great impertinence, she had thought at the time, as if an Englishwoman couldn't be expected to have either!

At dinner that night, Mrs. Lambeth hardly noticed Catherine. There were several visitors for the week-end, and Chris had forgotten to inquire whether the girl had returned or not. Just for a moment her eyes rested on Catherine, almost in surprise to find her so lovely. She was wearing a new dress that Chris had ordered for her, very "modish" and yet with a touch of quaintness that enhanced the girl's quiet beauty. Chris's practiced eye took in the long folds of tulle of opal colors that, gathered at the waist and a little full like an old world picture, gave her such an air of distinction. Though why she had changed the very décolleté corsage she could not imagine. She must speak to Catherine about being bourgeois and prudish —she was not going to chaperon an old maid into society, but a pretty girl, and the sooner she made a good marriage the better. Catherine had slipped in at the last moment as there was a woman short, and found a place not far from her stepfather. The man on her right she had never seen before, and she suddenly felt quite certain that she hoped she might never see him again. Chris had called down the table.

"Mr. Carmichael, I don't think you've met my girl yet—" And her neighbor had fixed his monocle firmly, and turned to her in very evident admiration.

Suddenly in the general babel of conversation she heard the Lanescourts' name mentioned and her mother saying:

"Oh, Lady Mary never approved of me. She gave me up as hopeless years ago."

There was a general laugh, and under its cover Catherine said in a low voice to her stepfather:

"Have you known them a long time, then, Daddy?"

"So long ago that we shall have to begin all over again I expect," said Colonel Lambeth dryly.

"I hear Roger's got quite a gift of oratory and is expected to do great things in the House," remarked a man from somewhere near Chris.

"Nice boys, both of them. What's become of the younger one, he was worth all of them put together? Is it true he's going to be a what-you-may-call-it—a monk, is it, eh what?" asked Catherine's monocled neighbor, and for a moment the girl held her breath. Was it true?

"A monk! What are you thinking of, Johnny! He manages his uncle's, Lord Glavebury's, estate in Devonshire."

"Well, isn't that next door to being a monk?" said some one. "Glavebury is a perfect fossil of piety, with the house full of chapels and priests, and the park overrun with convents. Hasn't Ralph got a sister who's a nun somewhere?" No one seemed to know and the chatter took another form. Catherine got up to her room as soon as she could that night. She wanted to be alone. What had he prayed for in that little room? For the repose of the boy's soul he had said—but *wasn't* he at rest, once dead? And he had prayed for something else too. He could explain things.

But again the thought came to her: Could it be true that Ralph Lanescourt was really going "into religion"? Why had he not entered then, years ago when he was younger? He must be at least about thirty-two or three. She remembered Barbara Maynard had once laughingly remarked, "Oh, Ralph, he lives with one foot in a monastery. Every one says the other only wants a little push and he'll get there all right."

The thought of him, with his rather grave, handsome face, his aristocratic air, his well-groomed figure came before her. She wondered she had not yet met him there—but she wondered if he did everything most men did in her world. It couldn't be true then he was ever going to shut himself up! And then she saw him kneeling beside Larry, the beater's bed, making that strange sign with the little twig of box that had scattered a drop of water on her in its passage. She shut her eyes and seemed to see the vision of a mighty citadel, against which waves of impotent forces beat themselves in vain. A citadel of which that little quiet room of death and love and faith was one of the loveliest towers.

And she had been outside it all!

There was something very wonderful in Ralph Lanescourt's face—something she——

But if that was true about him—she must—just be careful.

CHAPTER VIII

During the next few days Catherine almost made up her mind to brave her mother's displeasure and ride over to see Father Melford. There were so many things she wanted to ask him, so many things he could tell her that she knew nothing about. At any rate who was there who could explain to her all this growing stir and restlessness that was filling her with a sense of expectancy, a waiting for something great to burst upon her? She would have asked Toulon if she knew him better, simply because among all the people she had met there had been no one who, at any rate, even seemed to have a *vie intérieure,* and his books had certainly opened up such heavenly vistas! Certainly the priest would understand, but then she would either have to disobey her mother in going to him, or give up the idea entirely. And she prided herself on respecting authority! She had told Colonel Lambeth about the message she had been asked to carry, and he had told her not to speak of it to Chris, it would annoy her, she would probably put a stop to Catherine's riding alone. So she sighed a little as she cleaned her paint brushes and put her head on one side to inspect the little water color she had done of the view from her window. She opened a drawer and pulled out a portfolio full of sketches. How long ago it seemed

since she had gone on those excursions with Mademoiselle Maudon and Thérèse and Marie, and they had all painted together! What a lovely time they had had! Ah, that was the year they went to visit the castles of the Loire—how hot it had been! She turned over the little water colors—remembering how they had listened to Mademoiselle's learned discourses on art and sculpture, and how Thérèse had declared that the people who had lived in the castles interested her much more than the castles themselves. And Mademoiselle had quoted Shakespeare with a Parisian accent. " 'The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interrèd with their bones." Catherine laughed at the recollection, and opened another folio. This had been the last summer she was there. They had gone to the Pyrenees and moved about from Argélès to Bagneres, from Cauterets to Bareges, then to Luchon and a flying visit to many lovely little villages hidden in the mountains. Here was a little view taken of a place they could see far below them when they were picnicking one day on a high plateau. She liked that little sketch. She remembered how shocked Mademoiselle had been because she painted it lying flat on the grass. She had said she couldn't get the church in if she did not see it that way—it was so far below. What *was* the name of it? She had forgotten. How stupid she had been not to have written its name on the back. They had wanted Mademoiselle so much to let them go and visit the village, but the chauffeur had said that it would make them very late returning. What *was* the name of it!

"Catherine—I want you to ride over to Lady Morson's for me—or will you take your little car—it would be quicker perhaps?"

Mrs. Lambeth had come into the room, a letter in her hand. She sat down by the table as she spoke, taking up and throwing down one after the other the little water colors.

"She will give you lunch—you can't get back in time—give her this note and say I'll have a house party for her fancy dress ball—" She stopped short suddenly, and Catherine, who had begun to change and get into her old riding habit, turned to look at her. She was looking at the little water color Catherine had painted of that village whose name she could not remember. But how ill her mother looked—she was quite white, and yet her eyes seemed to be flaming.

"What is it?" Catherine ran to her and was pushed roughly to one side.

"What is this? When were you there?" Chris's voice sounded hoarse as she stood up and pointed to the little water color.

"But I have never been there—we were a long way off when I did that."

Then something gave her a courage which she had never before had in the face of her mother's tempers.

"Do you know the place?" she asked very gently, and almost started when Chris suddenly tore the sketch in two and threw it into the fireplace.

"I happen to have traveled a little in my life, and I have an unpleasant recollection of some places. That water color reminded me of some of them."

Chris had pulled herself together and with an effort had spoken quietly, but Catherine saw she was almost trembling, and she did not dare to ask any more. She noticed her mother glance once at the two torn pieces on the hearth, where the fire had not reached them, but merely saying, "Get off as fast as you can, it looks like rain," she left the room.

Catherine stooped to pick up the little torn sketch and, holding the two pieces together, she studied it with a troubled frown on her face. "What happened there? And what *was* its name?"

She put the pieces away in the top drawer of the tallboy, standing on a chair to reach it. As she put the sketch in, she saw at the back of the drawer a manuscript envelope, very full of papers, and carelessly tied up with an old piece of that colored paper string which French confectioners affect. Catherine had no time to examine it then—she would see what it was and give it to her mother later on. She locked the drawer and, putting the keys in a safe place, she replaced the chair and gathered up her habit. As she passed the long mirror, she stopped; something, she had no idea what, seemed to please her. With a little whimsical air she bent forward and kissed her reflection in the glass.

"Cheer up, Catherine, my dear—hitch your wagon to the stars and ride light."

There was no sign of rain in spite of her mother's warning when she galloped across the low-lying hills that morning, and as she entered Lady Morson's dining room, every one turned to look at and admire the

lovely little flushed face that for a moment had a startled look in the dark eyes. There seemed to be only one person in the room to Catherine. She saw Ralph Lanescourt push his chair back and get up as Lady Morson held out her hands affectionately.

"Why, Catherine, you little vision of beauty, what brought you here to put the finishing touch to my luncheon party?"

"Bobby, of course—but oh, do please excuse me—I am not fit for your table—we splashed through some dreadful country," laughed Catherine as her hostess pulled her down to kiss her.

"But you must count me too among your old friends, Miss Lambeth, since I knew your mother years ago," said an old gray-haired, distinguished-looking woman, turning a kindly smiling face to Catherine, and holding out her hand as Lady Morson continued:

"Lady Mary Lanescourt, Catherine—and your next-door neighbor, Mr. Ralph Lanescourt. Quite right, Jenkins, yes, place a chair there. Now sit down, darling—your other neighbor is Mrs. Foster, whom I see you know. Ah, you know Father Melford too—Father, whom do you *not* know?" She went on prattling and smiling, pressing the dishes on her guests that the servants offered, hiding her surprise that Catherine had smiled across the table at the old priest who had at first given no sign of his having met her already: hiding her wonder when Ralph, who had stood with the other men, but had not sat down when they had—took the hand she held out as she sat down beside him, saying, "Thursday is always my lucky day."

"I think Monday is mine," laughed Catherine, referring as he knew she did to the day they had met, the week before. Father Melford understood, and smiled over his claret, and all through lunch as he listened to the talk and joined in it he was conscious of the young man with the strong, grave face opposite him and the girl with her luminous eyes and quiet laugh. He knew a great deal, did Father Melford, he hoped great things, he prayed, not for miracles, but for right guidance for himself and for his flock—and as he glanced once in their direction and saw Ralph look at Catherine and the girl meet his eyes with frank modesty but with the same light in her eyes that Ralph had, the old priest lost the thread of his conversation with his neighbor. "God's will be done in all things —I may have made a mistake," he murmured to himself, and apologized for his absent-mindedness.

Some one else was listening to and noting Catherine. Lady Mary, without showing more than a kind and friendly interest in the girl, was taking great stock of her. Ralph had spoken to her the other night about the Lambeths, and mentioned his meeting with her, but he had been surprised when his mother had said energetically:

"I didn't remember the Lambeths had a girl, but it is a house I prefer to avoid!"

To-day, seeing Catherine for the first time, she was immensely struck with her quiet dignity and her serene beauty. No wonder Ralph had been attracted. He disliked the modern girl, and yet there was sufficient of the modern in Catherine to enhance the rarer quali-

ties which marked her out from the ordinary society girl. As she turned her head to reply to some remark of Lady Morson's there was something in the girl's face under its little gray felt hat that gave Lady Mary a sudden recollection.

"I wonder," she thought, "is this poor Gaston's daughter—she is his living image! But then—" Her reflections were interrupted. Every one was getting up, and Catherine was giving her mother's message to her hostess. Yes, how extraordinarily like Gaston she seemed, her tall, slim figure in its well-cut habit—she was glad she wore the much abused habit—Lady Mary had a great dislike to girls riding in breeches, though there were excellent reasons to be given for every fashion nowadays.

"A fancy dress ball? Oh, my dear Lady Morson, I'm afraid John will be nursing his gout and I my rheumatism by our fireside—we shall count on the young people to tell us all about it after."

As Lady Mary said good-by to Catherine, she held her hand for a moment.

"Did I catch your name rightly, my dear? Because you remind me so much of—" she was going to say "—your mother's first husband," but as she hesitated at a possible indiscretion, Catherine said quickly, "I am Catherine de Gardeville—it was my own father's name." And then fearing that Lady Mary might misjudge her mother, she added, "I think Mother can't bear to speak about him still, so I have always been called Lambeth." There was something in her, and in her words, that touched the older woman. With

a gentle movement she drew the girl's face down to hers and kissed her.

"You must come and see me one day and we will talk about him," she said. Ralph was standing near, not attempting to hide the satisfaction it gave him to see his mother, always a little critical and exclusive, especially with the modern girl, unbend so graciously and kindly to this wonderful young Diana.

When Catherine had gone, Lady Mary was for a moment apart with Father Melford.

"Is Miss Lambeth one of your flock, Father?" she asked in a low voice. No good waking Lady Morson's unappeasable curiosity. Father Melford shook his head.

"No—I hear they have the greatest antipathy toward anything Catholic—or indeed toward any sort of religion. But it is hard to believe it, looking at that girl."

Lady Mary nodded her head.

"There is something I can't understand. The girl's father was a good French Catholic, and you know what it is to be a good French Catholic, don't you!"

"Ah, yes—a good French Catholic is a thing apart!" he said, and Lady Mary went on:

"It was curious, I knew de Gardeville in Paris. He was for a time tutor to my two boys. A brilliant writer, a splendid Catholic, the last of a distinguished but impoverished family. After we left Paris, I heard he had married a neighbor of ours, Chris Graham—but they never came to Old Park and he died a year or two after the marriage. Surely, Father, that girl must be Catholic?"

The priest was frowning with the effort to remember something. Where had he come across the name de Gardeville—something he had read—what was it? Long ago he was in France once—something—ah, yes, that was it! A book of de Gardeville's censured. An article in a French Catholic paper regretting the brilliant gifts that had allowed themselves to be used unworthily after great promise: powers that had been exploited by men whose party was now banned more severely even than de Gardeville's book. There was no opportunity for saying more than a murmured, "Don't spare your prayers for that child—I will see you again."

Ralph settled himself at the wheel, and pulled on his gloves, and Father Melford absent-mindedly stood exactly in front of the bonnet rubbing his hands.

"Well, Father, let me know when you've quite finished your meditation," said the young man, smiling. Father Melford smiled too as he moved quickly to one side.

"I'm thinking I won't be through with this meditation for some time," he muttered to himself, and raised his hat with a little wave as the car drove off.

Well, to-morrow he would say mass for a very special intention with reference to that "meditation," and he set off to pay some sick calls, feeling half the burden had been lifted. When he got home, there was a penciled card left by Ralph as they had passed the presbytery. "Could you say mass to-morrow for a very special intention? I will come and serve."

Well, well, thought Father Melford—the boy shall

have it—perhaps they are hardly the same, his and mine! Later on the telephone rang.

"Hullo—hullo—oh, yes, yes, Lady Mary—yes—oh—to-morrow for a special intention? I'm sorry, no, I can't. The next day? Yes—very good—yes, good-by."

Father Melford sat down in the shabby old chair by his writing table, and made a note in his daybook. Then he took up a pipe, but after gazing abstractedly at it for a few moments, he pushed it away. Old Martha had made a good fire, and brought in the lamp. The town electricity did not extend to the Catholic church or the presbytery, they were between two boundary lines and Father Melford saw no prospect of ever getting such modern comfort. Still, there were plenty of things they wanted more than that.

"Thank you, thank you, Martha, don't put any more on the fire unless you want to make a second St. Lawrence of me," he said as she proceeded to empty a coal scuttle into the grate.

"I thought of a bloater for your supper, Father," said the woman suddenly as she put the tongs down.

"Well now, that was a brain wave, Martha—I had such a fine dinner to-day I felt uneasy sitting down to it."

"Ah, well, Father, as long as you didn't feel onaisy getting up from it, it'll be doing you good. 'Tis no grand fare you do be gettin' here," she said as she pushed a chair into position and left the room. As soon as she had gone Father Melford unlocked a

drawer in the table, and took out a letter. It was six months old. It ran:

August 16.

DEAR FATHER: Yes, that hope is always before me. Sometimes I am almost persuaded, but the time is not yet. Certainly I can honestly say that no affection is keeping me back—you thought there might be? No, Father—I have never met the woman I had the slightest desire to marry.

Yrs. affect[ly]

R. L.

Ah, but now! now? thought the priest, locking up the letter again.

CHAPTER IX

TOULON had not reckoned with the elements when he had proposed returning to Gérac in a few days. When he woke the next morning in his room at the little inn, he found the skies descending in floods of rain, the mountains lost in angry clouds and mists, and he knew that the climb he had proposed for himself was, for the present at least, quite impracticable. He pulled up his chair to the refractory stove, in the little *salle à manger,* where fat old Abette was kneeling, with the bellows, trying to encourage the feeble flames.

"Ah, this stove is a monster, planted here by the devil himself, Monsieur! And the wood is all wet, but there—I think it marches now."

She got up with difficulty, very red in the face.

"Without doubt, if it is one of the devil's stoves, I don't think much of his ideas of heating. But perhaps he is overrated, Abette——"

Abette, rather uneasy at hearing the devil so lightly spoken of, hurried off to bring in the black coffee and the steaming milk. The bread was already on the table, and there would be no butter in Caussac till to-morrow—or the day after.

By the time Toulon had finished his breakfast, the fire had decided to "march," and, stretching out his legs to the warmth, he took out some papers and began

making notes. He had nearly finished his book on the Instability of Genius, a work that had occupied him, possessed him, almost obsessed him, for the last two years. And then there had come a halt. To finish that book he must have the mountain tops, and the mountain tops hid themselves—not only actually, but spiritually. He glanced ruefully at the stove which had begun again to smoke. It was just so that some devilish fumes were clouding his mind lately—not exactly with doubts, but blurring clear lines, dimming the perfection of the landscape. He leaned back in his chair. Verily, was the devil responsible for the less clear vision? After all, one's sight, physical and interior, was not so strong as one got on in life. Toulon's mind wandered back to a week spent at Cambridge with a man who was coaching some eights. He remembered the fierce rules and training the men were subjected to; the infringement of a single rule, perfectly innocuous in itself, might imperil the success of the crew. The Instability of Genius! He thought again of de Gardeville's history. He had been a genius if ever there was one, and yet—Toulon suddenly rose and walked up and down the room. Was it possible—and at the same moment he knew it was the case—this man had so impressed him, and his story, as he knew it, had so influenced him, that he—he, Toulon—was "pulling" in his race, like one who had faltered just a little in the discipline set for those who "run the race that is set before them"? He had, older man as he was, been touched and almost flattered by the deference, the whole-hearted admiration of a young

man whose genius and whose faith seemed to surpass his own. Certainly de Gardeville had been given to idealizing humanity. It was as if his own radiant faith illumined everything he met with in life. Even the time of his military service had, according to his own account, been a glorious and inspiring period, but then Toulon remembered the pure patriotism of the boy, and the traditions of the house of which he was the last surviving member, and he knew that it had been no political patriotism—none of that "charlatanesque battage electoral" as Louis Bertrand calls it, of the schools. Yes—Toulon admitted that he had allowed himself to be impressed by de Gardeville's débâcle" to such an extent that he himself had come to a halt—not in his mind surely, but in his writings—but that *was* his mind!

The only thing to be done, then, to clear his own soul of confusions which certainly came from the devil's own stove, was to find out what had happened to Gaston. Had he died in the darkness, or had he found serenity of soul at the last? Toulon felt that until he knew this for certain there was going to be a halt for him which not only hurt his literary pride but what was far worse, affected his spiritual "visibility." In the meantime he would go and find that priest again. The sooner he got back into the condition of one who runs a great race, the better, and his trainer, his coach for that race, was a priest. As he wrapped his cloak round him and climbed up the village street to the presbytery, he smiled to himself as he thought of the title of his book, the subject of which had been his companion

day and night. Instability—and the smile became a little melancholy as he realized the *un-sereneness* of his thoughts lately. Instability—Restlessness—Stability—Serenity! That last novel of his, written during a short visit to Italy and expressing vividly what again Toulon called to himself un-sereneness of mind, had been certainly a "best seller," but the graver reviews had spoken of it with reservation, one of them heading his article with *"Et tu, Brute?"* Instability! Toulon murmured the word as he knocked at the presbytery door—Instability!

Later, as he left the little church, the Curé, who had long since gone back to his house, saw him turn toward de Gardeville's grave. Wonderful—this humble penitent was the celebrated Henri Toulon! He had no idea of it when he entered the confessional. A writer, yes, from the nature of his confession, but it was only by accident, just as he was leaving, that the Curé realized the fact. He thanked God for that morning's work—for what it had been given him to say, and for the spirit in which it had been given his penitent to receive it.

The next day Toulon arrived back at Gérac and in spite of the rain that must have considerably spoiled his tramp, Solange thought he seemed to be in excellent spirits. His first words were:

"And Jeanne Clavé, Solange, is she here?"

"Yes, Monsieur, but she waits to see you."

The next morning Solange tapped at Toulon's door, and he stood up as she announced:

"Jeanne Clavé, Monsieur."

A tall woman, Jeanne, with white hair just showing under her black *capuchon*—with deep-set black eyes and the long straight nose of the Pyrenean peasant. Her kindly, handsome old face had a hundred fine wrinkles in it, and the spirit that informed her slow smile and her quiet voice was of that pure faith that had made France the beloved daughter of the Church.

Solange had told her that her master wrote books, and Jeanne had nodded. It was a strange occupation, and often hurt the soul—she knew. There were many dangers in the printed word—one could grievously sin even, as she remembered. She took the chair Toulon pushed forward for her, thanking her in his most courteous way for having come up the hill on the first morning of his return. Solange shut the door behind her at last. She had poked the fire, swept the hearth, picked up and folded yesterday's *Echo de Paris,* arranged the little curtains, in fact delayed her exit as long as she possibly could, so that she could gather some idea of the reason of this interview. But Toulon was only making remarks about the road between here and Caussac, and Jeanne was telling him of great falls of snow when no one had been able to get to her village or to leave it. Assuredly it was not to discuss things like that that the master had desired to see her, but as there was nothing else to be done, she regretfully left the room. There would be nothing to be got out of Jeanne afterward—a close woman that, but a woman to be respected and admired.

Presently Toulon began to talk of his visit to Caussac—his finding the grave of an old friend—his dis-

covery that it was Jeanne herself who had nursed him —de Gardeville. Did she remember him among the many people she had nursed and helped?

"Remember him? Oh yes, indeed. There was a history! but of a sadness, of a beauty, of a consolation, *enfin!*" For a moment her eyes took a strange, far-away, absent look as she gazed beyond Toulon and seemed to forget his presence. Very gently, the man touched the gnarled old hands folded on her knee. He told her a little of his love for de Gardeville—of his early faith and piety, and of his later writings. As he spoke of Gaston's writings Jeanne fixed her eyes on Toulon.

"Yes—it was that. He had denied *le bon Dieu*—in his life and in his books—but he repented," she murmured.

"Will you tell me exactly everything you can remember about him? I want to vindicate his memory," he did not say "to restore my own peace of mind."

"There were many visitors in Caussac that summer," Jeanne began, after a moment's silence. "I saw nothing of any of them except when I passed them on my way to market every morning. Monsieur de Gardeville and his wife—she was English—never came to the presbytery—nor to the church at all. It was only after the fever broke out that I saw him for the first time. He came up to see Monsieur le Curé, and never shall I forget his distress. He was on the steps, bareheaded, breathless when I opened the door. He almost pushed past me and seized the hand of Father Garnier, who was in the hall. 'Where can I place my daughter

in safety—the nurse is dying, and the hotels are closing?' The good Father asked him had the child no mother, and he replied suddenly quite quiet, 'There is no question of the mother.' We knew afterward that she had left in a panic with some other people, leaving a message that as Nurse and baby were out for a walk she had not waited for them, but they could follow." Toulon made a little gesture of horror.

"How old was the child?" he asked.

"Only a few months old. I heard that the mother had never wanted one. That she was furious when she realized her state, and that she only consented to 'go throught with it' on conditions that seem mad to have been made, and mad to have been accepted."

"What were they?" Toulon folded his arms and leaned back in his chair. He almost knew for certain what the answer was to be.

"Madame had, it appears, been very much in love with her husband, and as he was a good Catholic, at the time of his marriage, she let herself be instructed and was received into the Church. But look you, Monsieur, she had never, I should say, kept any obligations in her life; when she was tired of something, she just discarded it—and she had a fascination!" Jeanne lifted her hands and let them fall again. "We found a home for the poor child at Larroust, near here. The nurse died, and it was my niece who looked after her."

"But those conditions—" Toulon's voice broke in gravely.

"Ah, Monsieur—she had the skill of the devil. She

had flattered his power of writing, she had surrounded him with people who were all against religion—and I know that by the time the child was born he had given up his duties, and that his writings were condemned. The conditions! The child was not to be baptized, and was to be brought up rationally, and Monsieur de Gardeville was to be one of the great leaders of common sense, as she called it."

Toulon looked at the woman. How had she known all this? Jeanne read his thoughts apparently, for she continued in her calm even voice, using now and then a word or two of the local patois, but for the most part speaking a French that surprised Toulon by its correctness.

"He told me many things, Monsieur, when he lay ill—and he told me many more when he was delirious. It was the day after she went away, he brought the child to be baptized—Marie Dolores Catherine—poor soul. He said, she will pray for me! The Curé tried to stop his working too hard, but nothing seemed to arrest him. He was everywhere—there was nothing too repulsive, nothing too difficult, no one more tender and wise with the worst cases and the black sheep of the place. Then one day he came and told me all his history." Jeanne wiped the tears away from her eyes.

"And then, after that," she said simply, "he went to confession and received the Sacraments every day. He told me once, laughing—eh, but he had a gay laugh even when he had a world of suffering in his eyes—he told me he had written the best chapter he had ever

imagined, and that if he were spared, all his life would be given to expiating the last two years. But he got ill at once. He would not have the child sent for—he denied himself that joy because of the contagion and it was all over so quickly—so quickly. He had no strength left."

Toulon had got up and was standing at the window with his back to Jeanne. He was deeply moved. He had forgotten that "chapter of salvation" in the deep feeling of relief and gratitude that de Gardeville had been reconciled, and that he had made his submission some weeks before his final illness.

"He had to be buried before we could find out where Madame had gone. She sent some one to fetch the child, but it was not till long afterward that we were able to send her his little belongings. She told us to burn everything, but Monsieur le Curé had his papers and books well disinfected, and sent to the address given—with other things—not clothes, those were burned."

"Do you remember the address?" he asked. Jeanne shook her head.

"It was an English name. I have it at home, but I could not remember it now. The Curé thought she had married again, but of that I know nothing. I will send it you, Monsieur."

She got up slowly from her chair, a little stiff in her joints. The weather was making her feel her rheumatism, and perhaps the stirring of those old memories reminded her that life was closing in around her. "Monsieur writes books?" She more stated a fact

than asked a question, and as Toulon smilingly replied that that was his "trade," she said, "It is a great privilege, Monsieur, when one is a good Catholic, to be able to be its apostle. But I have seen the man—like that one Our Lord told to sell all that he had—I have seen him so rich in mental gifts that he could not bring himself to let any of them go—so he shut himself out from Heaven. How hardly shall a rich man——"

Her voice sounded suddenly old and tired. There was something in this grave elderly man's face that forbade her to say more, but as he thanked her for coming he held her old rough hand in his for a moment.

"Jeanne Clavé, when I make my communion to-morrow, it will be with more faith and hope than I have had for a long time."

As he closed the door after her, he turned in his chair with a positive feeling that his mountain tops were clear again—that though it could hardly augment his ease of mind, there was only one thing left now to set his feeling of restored inspiration to work. Find that last chapter Gaston had surely written—the "chapter of Salvation"! But how!

The next day Jeanne posted a card. It had the words:

The lady's address is
Mrs. Lambeth, Old Park, Westshire.

CHAPTER X

CHRIS had been considerably annoyed when she heard that Catherine had stumbled on that "Lanescourt woman," and she appeared to be not displeased at having been out when Lady Mary called a few days after. It was perhaps this that made her smile on an invitation for Catherine to go to the Maynards for a few days; Barbara, bereft of her father, who was in London, demanded Catherine's instant support, and Chris quite unexpectedly gave her consent. The Maynards' place was further away from the Lanescourts than from Old Park or the Morsons. There was a luncheon party too, or at any rate an invitation to one at Lanescourt, and if Catherine were away there would be no question of her going, as Lady Mary had particularly hoped she would, mentioning in her note to Chris the pleasure it had given her to meet "your daughter"! She had not been able to bring herself to write Miss Lambeth! Well—so far, so good—and after this there could be more visits, but in a milieu very different to the Maynards.

There was something disturbing Chris lately. John thought she missed the noise of her London life, but said nothing. He loved stalking over the fields and woods, his gun under his arm, Rack at his heels, and a keeper at hand, potting at rabbits or whatever might

offer. Chris said she hated the way one lived in each other's pockets in the country, and that she was going to have the telephone cut off. In London you told your servants "not at home" if you wanted to escape people. Here, they rang you up to find out where you were before they put their decrepit horses into the family bus, or called the gardener from the potato patch to drive the antediluvian car, and if you swore you were not at home, they had the imbecility to try and fix a day with the butler when they would find you in. And so on, and so on. It was not really that that disturbed Chris—it was Catherine. Her mother had done her best—or her worst—to make a modern, pleasure-loving, or pleasure-seeking (for such a sickly thing as loving didn't come in to it) pleasure-seeking girl of her after her own type, thoroughly up-to-date and in fact in advance of her time. She had to admit that all Catherine's "chances" had left her the very opposite of what she had hoped for. She had let her mix with the most ultra-modern people that London could provide, had urged her, down here at Old Park, to cultivate the Carmichaels and the Bostons, and their kind, and in spite of her surroundings Catherine had —Chris recognized it furiously—such a seductive aloofness, such an informed innocence guarding her like an invincible sheath, that Mrs. Lambeth found herself baffled and—worse still, rebuked. She hated to feel that it was something the girl had inherited in her blood. If such an operation could have been performed, she would have liked to have all the French blood in Catherine—that is to say the blood that her

father had transmitted to his daughter with all his poetical and sentimental tendencies, as she put it—drained from her, and sensible good English blood pumped into her in its place. She had believed that Catherine, removed from such influence by the death of her father when she was still a babe, could be molded and trained to the only type of woman Chris appreciated—soulless, creedless and when it pleased her, lawless; in a word, pleasantly and alluringly pagan. Something had happened to make her change all her plans and remove the household to Old Park, but whatever it had been that she wanted to avoid, events had been displeasing her down here, though why it had annoyed her so much to find Catherine attracted to Lady Mary Lanescourt and her quiet milieu was a mystery even to John, who put it down to his wife's dislike of Catholics. But the Lanescourts, who were so very exclusive!

Well, they would not be so anxious to meet Catherine when they understood, as they would quite soon, that she was a frequent guest at the Carmichaels. Lady Mary had two sons she had brought up in cotton wool —Catholic cotton wool too—Chris threw her cigarette contemptuously into the fire—and once such a liaison between the Boston, Carmichael and Lambeth houses was known—and she would see that the news should reach Lanescourt—her pious ladyship would drop the girl in holy horror.

The day before Catherine left with Barbara, Chris came into the girl's room, an open letter in her hand.

"You are in luck, Catherine! Pat Carmichael is having a lot of people for the fifteenth and she wants

you to go for a week or so. It's a top-hole house to visit."

She held a long leg out to the fire as she leaned against the mantelpiece. Catherine was writing at the table and looked up, a little startled.

"You don't want me to go there, do you, Mother?" she said quickly.

"Of course I do. Why not? There's going to be dancing, and I hear there's to be a special company down from town to inaugurate their new little private theater. Pat is so up-to-date, in fact she is always before the date and you'll have some play that's probably been banned in London. I shall come over for it!" Chris laughed as she changed her position and examined her face in the glass.

Catherine was balancing the pen in her hand, her eyes far away, looking beyond the low hills and woods that she could see from her window.

"I'll get your clothes overhauled while you are at the Maynards—and we'll run up to town when you come back," continued Chris, "there will be plenty of time before the fifteenth!"

Catherine pulled herself together. She was a little frightened, but she did not mean to go.

"Mother, I simply *can't* go there. Please don't accept for me." She was standing now, turning to her mother with a troubled look in her face.

"Can't! What do you mean? Such nonsense! Of course you can. I've written to accept!" Chris spoke sharply, remembering John Lambeth's advice which she had scoffed at yesterday. "Don't drive the girl

into that Carmichael set—its sending a lamb to the slaughter."

"But the invitation has only just come, hasn't it?—you can't have sent the answer to the post already, and, Mother—I'm sorry, but I will *not* go and stay in that house. There is something—something I can't bear when I am near them."

She was amazed at her own temerity, and a little surprised that Chris took it in the way she did.

"My dear child—you are young enough to have to obey me, and old enough to know that you have to meet all sorts in a society like ours—" she began, and was interrupted by Catherine.

"Like ours—that's just it, Mother. Why need we meet people like that? The Lanescourts—even the Maynards don't——"

"The Lanescourts—narrow, ignorant Catholics whose only idea is shutting their daughter up in a convent, and who wanted to make priests of their sons! *They* are the people we are *not* going to cultivate, I can tell you, Catherine! As for the Maynards—they simply don't count. After your visit to the Carmichaels you won't be invited even there again!" She laughed, pushing a log into its place with the tip of her shoe.

"Then that decides me, Mother—please say no for me."

"I shall say no such thing, you little idiot——" Chris turned angrily to speak, and not for the first time it seemed that the girl's dead father stood before her.

"I hate to disobey you, Mother, but I won't go to

stay there—I would rather—run away!" she laughed a little.

"You will neither disobey me nor run away. Where you are getting all these virtuous tricks and habits from I have no idea. If it's your books"—she glanced at the table and shelves filled with them—"I will have them all burned," she ended sharply, knocking an ornament down as she turned to go.

Catherine watched the car, which was taking her mother and Colonel Lambeth out for the afternoon, disappear through the trees. It was quite likely her beloved books would be taken away and she took one out after another, opening and shutting them, remembering where she had bought them, where and how she had read them—the color they had given to what had seemed a blank map of life. It was these friends that had helped her to fill it in—and yet how incomplete it still was. And what a "mixed society," after all, her books had been until Henri Toulon's works had made her choice more eclectic. Léon Bloy, Ernest Hello, Barrés, a little book of Charles de Foulcauld, Verlaine's poems that she had always kept hidden from Mademoiselle. Zola and Balzac—they might be burned, but not these—she would arrange a shelf that might be confiscated—and she began changing and sorting—filling gaps with a vase here, or a box there. There was an *Imitation of Christ*—she had not opened it for a long time, and she saw lines she had penciled a year or two ago, and forgotten. "What is it I demand of thee if it is not that thou abandon thyself to me without reserve. All that thou givest me

outside thyself is nothing to me, because it is thou thyself I seek and not thy gifts."

She would put that little book in her pocket—and wondered what her mother would say, not at the row of French authors, profane, philosophic and religious, but at—for instance that little *Vie dévoté—that* should be rescued too—and then she laughed suddenly to find a little yellow back, *"Il faut marier Jean"* cheek by jowl with it. She hid away the books she liked best of Toulon's—the books that had made her want to trace the running stream of his happy inspiration to its source. She had stood abashed and stunned before the deep faith that had informed his genius. She felt a little like a person who has learned how to play but has no instrument: like one who has learned to speak languages and finds himself among the dumb. What was she to do with this new faith inside her—who could give her advice?

On the Sunday morning of her visit to Maynards, Barbara had said she was going to motor in to church at Manor Vernon. Would Catherine care to come? Except for some smart weddings in London, she had never been inside any church, and as they got out of the little car in the old High Street, Catherine looked up at the great tower, the bell of which was ringing for its Protestant service. A sudden temptation seized her to go to that ugly little church at the crossroads, a little further on; a quite sudden and unaccountable feeling that she belonged to that one, and that nothing in her responded to what she knew of any other.

"Barbara—let's go to the Catholic church—" she

said as they stood back for a moment to let the school children file in.

"What an idea! I don't think I dare. Father would hate it, and people would talk and make a nine days' wonder of it. You go—" Barbara had objected. Catherine nodded and sped away in a hurry. She had visited churches and cathedrals in France, with Mademoiselle Maudon at her elbow, but no time had been given her to absorb anything but information on the Gothic features and architectural peculiarities of each. Here—she glanced round the little brick church —here was quite a perfect little specimen of cheap ugliness, and yet it was one with all those cathedrals because it had what that little red flickering lamp indicated, Some one Who was with His church to the end of the ages. No—the last mass was finished, whispered an old woman, when Catherine asked her. So the girl knelt in the silence and presently heard the old woman go. It was very still there. She knew nothing about the Curé d'Ars old man who, when asked what he said in the long hours he spent before the tabernacle replied, "I just look at Him and He looks at me."

It seems to her sufficient just to do the same, but now and then her lips moved. It was so much more comforting to absorb that divine stillness than to frame words. It was as if a swimmer, who had been struggling against currents suddenly relaxed and rested on the sunlit bank of the river. And as she knelt there, there came to her the swift sweet certainty that she could have Ralph Lanescourt's love if she chose—that

there was something in her own heart only waiting his response. The thought gave her a little shock—after all—did she know her own heart? Was it—was it exactly *that* that was pushing, pervading her, obsessing her lately? Something so insistent, so hungry, so divine, so discontenting? She thought shyly, with her eyes closed, of what Ralph's love might be for her—of hers for him—if—if she really did love him. And in the vision there seemed still the hunger, only something of the divine, and still the discontent. What was it—what did it mean? And then out of her thoughts there came some words she said tremblingly, with her eyes misty and puzzled resting on the little veiled tabernacle.

"Show me what it is you want and I'll do it." She got up from her knees, not sure yet that "it" might not be Ralph after all, and slowly left the church. It was rather unfortunate, she thought, that she should find Lady Mary on the steps talking to Father Melford. They tried not to show their surprise at seeing her, and Father Melford said with a little twinkle:

"Now which part of my church have you hitched up your horse to this time, Miss Lambeth—or it'd be your car perhaps?"

Catherine smiled.

"Bobby is spending a Protestant sabbath in his stall, Father. I—yes, I came too late. I thought there would be mass," she added simply, not looking at either of them, and Lady Mary remarked quite naturally that she found it so far to come that they took pity on her and gave her a cup of tea at the presbytery after mass.

She saw plainly that the girl had been greatly moved

—she had evidently been praying. What an extraordinary thing that Chris could have a daughter like this—but there was good Catholic blood in the girl and none knew better than Lady Mary what that meant.

"And when are you coming to see me? With your mother and Colonel Lambeth next week, I hope. I have written to your mother—but in the meantime?"

Catherine explained that she was staying with Barbara Maynard, and still holding her hand, Lady Mary continued in a lower voice, as the priest went into the church for a moment:

"My dear, forgive an old woman's curiosity, but —you are Catholic, and yet Father tells me he never sees you here at mass?"

There was a little flush on Catherine's cheek at the words.

"I have been brought up with no religion—but everything in me loves the Catholic church—though I don't belong to it—or indeed to any," she added. Surely, thought Lady Mary, Gaston de Gardeville could not have fallen away so terribly as to have made no provision for his child, but she could hardly say so to the girl.

"Well, my dear, your father was such a good Catholic when I knew him that I can't understand his daughter not being one." As she spoke, Catherine almost held her breath, and her hand unconsciously gripped Lady Mary's hand with an intensity that made the older woman wonder. For a moment her eyes held Lady Mary's in eager awed question.

"My father a Catholic?" The words came in a little fluttered hurry, and, catching her breath she bent her head a little nearer Lady Mary as if to be sure of hearing her better. "Why—why—are you quite sure? My father, Gaston de Gardeville? you say he was a Catholic?" Her voice was steady, but her heart was beating so fast it made her feel shaky all over. For a moment almost a sense of guilt affected Lady Mary, but she said to herself no one had the right to hide such a fact from the girl.

"My dear, he was a wonderful Catholic when I knew him. Had you no idea—" she began, gently, and Catherine interrupted her quite unconsciously.

"That is why then, I've *felt* it so," she murmured, addressing no one in particular. "Attracted isn't the word. Something like a long leash has drawn me, oh, for a long time—pulled! I didn't ever want it to stop pulling, but sometimes I've felt I must cry out, Wait —oh, don't pull so hard! Now I know. Now I needn't wait any longer."

She seemed suddenly to realize that Lady Mary was holding both her hands. With a pretty little French gesture she stooped and kissed the old lady's hand.

"Please excuse me, Lady Mary—I must speak to Father Melford."

Catherine found him kneeling in the church. As she waited for him, kneeling at the back so that he should not be disturbed, there came to her a delicious feeling of security. She was no alien, no stranger now. She could claim something surely of God, in her father's name—he had "belonged," and it should not

be long before she did! At last Father Melford got up, and Catherine, who had heard Barbara's motor horn violently blown two or three times, hurriedly asked him if she might come over to-morrow at whatever time he wished, to ask his advice on certain matters. When it was settled and she turned to go, he dismissed her with a kindly:

"Courage, child—pray as you never prayed before."

He watched her go down the narrow aisle, and as the door shut behind her, he knelt again. He had been praying for Catherine when she had come in—he had meant to pray again for her now, but somehow the thought of Ralph was possessing him. There was something that needed great prayer, great guidance. Ralph had come over one night, and slept in the little chilly spare room at the presbytery. They had talked till very late—at least Ralph had smoked a great deal and said really very few words, but they had been volumes for the priest. And then he had confessed before mass, which he had served—and had set off at once, without breakfast, for that long tramp which was to last some days.

So Father Melford sighed as he knelt down and presented his case—Ralph's case—which seemed to be mixing itself up in a strange way with some one else's —to the only One who could really help.

Catherine meanwhile was very silent as Barbara drove swiftly along the empty road.

"Well—I hope you got a better sermon than I did—not that I listened to it though—" Barbara glanced at her friend, and added, laughing, "Your eyes

look like two saucers—or rather, like two shining stars. What's the matter?"

"Perhaps it's because I *didn't* hear any sermon!" Catherine laughed gayly back. She couldn't talk of all the lovely things that were in her mind. So she listened to Barbara's chatter about the dullness of her life buried here in the country and the strictness with which her father surrounded her. Since the Boston-Carmichael affair she had never been allowed to go anywhere where she might meet them—and of all gay places, the Carmichaels' was the gayest. They knew how to entertain! At the other places one met old ladies. But half London came down to dance and eat and drink and laugh at the Carmichaels!

"Of course," said Barbara in her slow, well-bred voice, that had a little nasal accent in it, "I'm not keen on them for themselves. I think she's vulgar and he's a beast—but one meets people there. And as for them being divorced—it has lost its novelty and is getting quite respectable and an everyday affair. Protestants don't mind—they can't—they're a State church and the State's married them—and as for Catholics, well, that's their lookout—we've nothing to do with them."

Catherine was silent. She was wondering how she was going to get her mother to tell her why she had not been brought up in her father's church, and choosing the words she should use to inform her that she wished to become a member of it herself as soon as possible.

CHAPTER XI

It was Catherine's last day with Barbara and they decided to motor as far as Merehaven, a townlet in the folds of the downs, leave their car there, and climb up to the old Trysting Oak, from which point on a clear day, one could get a glimpse of the sea. Why the old stump was called an oak, history does not relate; it bore no semblance to any tree known to man, but its stump had been a landmark for many generations and a favorite point of view. From here, the downs seemed to roll and undulate into eternity—calm, untroubled, caressed here and there by still forests, or stately woods, which hid, or revealed, some old mansion, or some quiet village in their depths.

It was a steep climb, and Catherine was much more agile than her companion. At last Barbara, after much stumbling and slipping, trying in vain to keep pace with Catherine who was far ahead, sat down firmly on a large boulder.

"I'll wait for you here. I simply can't climb any more, it's too awfully exhausting," she called after Catherine who turned to wait for her.

"Oh, what a pity. Would you like me to stay? We can go another way not so difficult," Catherine cried, but Barbara much preferred sitting to walking, so she screamed back:

"No—I'll love to sit here or potter about. You must see that view, it's so glorious—go on, and don't hurry because of me."

Catherine needed no second bidding and in a moment had almost disappeared from view round the heel of a hill. Presently Barbara saw her again as she turned and waved her hand from a point much higher up. She was not too far off for her to note, with generous envy, the beauty of her friend, the grace of the young athletic figure as Catherine stood for a moment, balancing herself, one foot on a jutting rock, before she turned to climb again. She certainly had more than her share of the gifts of the gods, and not the least was that nameless, sympathetic charm which Barbara supposed came from the French blood in her.

"Where do you provision your interior fort, Catherine?—you never seem to lack ammunition for all occasions," she had said to her once, a little peevishly, admiring Catherine's attitude under conditions that she knew were unpleasant for her friend.

Catherine had laughed back, "You're out of date, my dear. It's secret intelligence, machine guns, and the A. S. C. these days—not forts," she said and Barbara had laughed, "Well, you know what I mean anyway. You give me the impression of having great reserves hidden somewhere, which you can call upon at will. Now I haven't got any. Every little bow and arrow I've got, all my little trumpeters and banners, are decorating my battlements. If they're potted at, down they go, and there's neither first aid for 'em or anything to take their place."

They had both laughed, Barbara a little ruefully, and Catherine had said half seriously, half in amusement, "It's bad strategy to have nothing to fall back on. I should furbish up my armory."

She thought of it now as she watched Catherine getting further away until at last she was quite hidden from her.

"Furbish up my armory!" Barbara considered that had been already well done for her by her parents, and that with the final seal of presentation at court she was ready at all points for what might come. If her moral constitution could find no nourishment from what life gave her to digest, it never occurred to her or her kind that the sooner she changed the régime the better. Anyone's *intérieure,* whether temporal or spiritual, will give trouble if not attended to and properly fed. Even the most secret, tiniest "sealed garden of the soul" will become a dunghill, with neglect.

"Lucky Catherine!" she sighed, as she opened her bag and powdered her nose, in a pensive frame of mind.

Catherine had meanwhile reached the top of the long, flattened downs. The sun was quite warm for a winter's day and she stood still to rest a moment and to gaze with delight at the view. Then she turned—to find Ralph Lanescourt standing close to her. He had been lying, with his head on his knapsack, behind a clump of gorse, and had got up rather annoyed at hearing some one approach.

For a fraction of a minute they gazed at each other,

too startled to hide the sudden look of joy in both their faces, then Catherine turned and pointed with a none too steady hand to the distant view.

"That can't be the sea? Barbara says I can see it from somewhere up here." It seemed to her that her voice sounded like some one else's, but Ralph answered in such a natural way that she recovered her confidence.

"It's a little further on. You're supposed to stand with your back to the old Trysting Oak, and they say you can get a glimpse of the sea. Legend says the Armada was sighted from here. I might add, it's not an article of faith." He pointed out to her landmarks, and from the downs they discussed the relative beauties of the Alps and the Pyrenees but came back swiftly homing to Westshire. He was striding beside her now, trying not to be conscious of her nearness, her dearness. Once, her shoulder touched his arm as the unevenness of the ground made her sway a little. He had turned his head then and looked at her, intending to speak, but the words died on his lips. Catherine's eyes were fixed on the old gnarled stump that had once, they said, been an oak. It stood out, black, almost menacing, against the sky that was tinged with red from the already setting sun—two broken, short branches, one on either side, giving it a mutilated, crosslike appearance. They were about a stone's throw from it, and Ralph noticed that instead of looking for that distant gleam of sea, Catherine's eyes were fixed on the old stump. For the last three days Ralph had been fighting something that held him like a chain—something he wanted to break, that had once made him a

willing prisoner, but that lately had pulled and strained him in its grip. He had fought it fiercely, furiously in the last few days. He was a free man, he said—free absolutely to love this woman who could make life glorious. Last night again he had argued and reasoned with himself; he had fought to break that chain, and something had broken in him—but it was not the chain. It was the chain that had drawn him down to his knees when he thought he was free—and he had found himself held by the end of a girdle whose length was bound about the feet of God. And now he almost had to begin the battle again. Why had she come to him like this, with the sun and the wind in her face, stepping gallantly beside him, all the world before them? A grim look of trouble, of something not quite understood, made him silent, but he looked up suddenly as he saw Catherine touching the old stump with her hand. They had come up to it and as he looked at her leaning against it he said suddenly:

"I walked here with my sister the day before she left us to go into her convent."

A curious thought came to him. He felt that a lot depended on what Catherine was going to say. She knew nothing of what he had been going through, but he felt himself waiting for her words now, as a prisoner waits for the judge's final verdict. He stood leaning on his stick, trying not to look at the lovely little flushed face that was somewhere on a level with his tweed shoulder—wondering if she would make the banal remark about the "sadness of such a separation." He hoped she wouldn't. Catherine was silent for

a moment, then she said slowly, as if searching for words she was not used to:

"That must have been a kind of—sacrament—for you both."

As she spoke, the grim look in Ralph's eyes seemed to give place to relief. Something loosed within him. He might have known she would feel like that. He looked down at her smiling.

"It was exactly what she said herself when we—when—we—" The smile slowly gave place to a troubled look again, and he hesitated, remembering the nature of that "sacrament." His sister and he, as long ago another child and her brother had done, had vowed themselves as children to the religious life; Betty had never swerved from her ambition. He had smiled at his childish impulse later on as a career totally unsuited to him—and yet had caught himself thinking of the might-have-beens with a vague pain that followed him in the congenial work of being his invalid bachelor-uncle's agent and man of business. He had great estates—he had begged Ralph to rule for him, and the life had interested and intrigued the young man who had a gift for affairs. And each year his earlier intention had become dimmer, less insistent later, and then—he had met Catherine Lambeth.

"You speak like a Catholic," he said slowly, and added, "I wish you had known Betty. She and I were great friends."

"Why do you say 'were'—she must be a far more wonderful friend now—" Catherine was standing with her back against the Trysting Oak, her hands

straight down beside her, and Ralph thought that the diffident note in her voice had given place to one of assurance. "She loved you all—how she must have loved her life here, her home—all this." Catherine's eyes swept the lovely glowing scented world before her. "But—you see, it was her box of precious ointment, and her love must have been immense. Nothing else is worth while." She seemed to be speaking to herself—to be answering some inner argument, with her head a little bent and her body pressed against the tree.

Ralph thought confusedly for a moment of St. Sebastian—and, "What do you know of the weakness or strength of love? Is no man's love worth while?" he burst out suddenly and Catherine startled, looked back at him.

"I only know—quite suddenly—the strength of God's love. It is—something—" she spoke a little breathlessly—"so compelling; it is a torrent one can't stand against. Human love—yes, if you have no higher mission—it must be beautiful." The words ended in a whisper.

What did she mean, no "higher mission"? What had she heard? What did she know?

"Catherine"—Ralph's voice sounded harsh—"it is what that same God gives to man—and woman."

"Some men—some women—yes. But some He chooses for greater love, greater service. Oh, I know now." She looked at him, suddenly relaxed, as it were, by the knowledge that had come to her, the sudden meaning of life—for her at least. And for him? How

was it the knowledge suddenly seemed to break in on her—that he had been destined for something greater than a woman's love; that he was in danger of avoiding that destiny?

"Mr. Lanescourt—Ralph," she said, and seeing the pain in his eyes she touched his arm gently with her fingers, "you know better than I do about those things. But I see God working out some scheme at His loom. There's something being woven for all of us. You and I and your sister—we are all in the same piece, or we are all of us in each other's. I believe she left me a message up here—it is that that has come to me. Don't let's struggle against God's design. I want more than anything else to be in the pattern. And that makes three sacraments in this place," she added, smiling at Ralph who was looking over her head into space.

"Three?" He looked at her almost suspiciously.

"I'm sure there were three—" she said, quietly moving away from the post. "I'm going down now—so good-by." She held out her hand but he hardly noticed it.

"But, Catherine, we can't part like this. If it means you are going to be a Catholic——"

"Oh, that, of course. But it means something greater. I seem to have been listening in by this cross-shaped Trysting Oak where your sister talked to you that last day. I am sure she left a wandering blessing here. How was it?" She asked Ralph suddenly and he flushed a little. How could he tell her Betty's sudden fear that he might turn from the high purpose they had promised themselves, and her half-laughing,

half-serious words, "Ralph, I'm going to pray with all my force that the first girl you ever really feel you want to marry will be the means of your keeping your vocation." He remembered even then shaking his head and saying, "Not vocation, Betty, only sometimes a leaning that way."

Then something made Catherine turn her eyes away as she added, laughing a little unevenly, "I'm going to follow her example. It was settled in heaven to-day."

Her smile demanded one from him, but he only dropped her hand and took a step or two away. Something in his eyes hurt her.

"Ralph—a mountain top is a lovely place to make a pact with God," she said. His eyes questioned her. What did she know? Why was she so ruthlessly closing a glorious vista of human love that had only lately opened before him, forcing to, with her firm young hand a door he had kept open—a door he had allowed to swing to and fro—which, last night he himself had almost shut, and to-day had pushed open again. "The first time I met you—" he began, and then stopped. Catherine took it up, speaking with a gentle humility but a certain note of confidence that Ralph was quick to notice.

"Yes, by Larry's deathbed. It was all in the pattern that is to be woven. I had to be taught—and while what was in that little room—and beyond it—was bringing God's ways to my understanding, and you were being reminded of them—we two met—and understood how much He wanted of us." Her heart beat fast—but she raised her face and looked fearlessly

at Ralph who had never taken his eyes from her while she was speaking. Neither spoke for a moment, but the silence was full of voices for both of them—even it seemed to Ralph, he heard the shutting of a door—or was it the shuttles of that loom? How was he to be sure—why was *she* so suddenly sure? His face looked grave.

"You are an amazing little convert," he said quietly. "Oh, do forgive me—*c'est bien le diable qui prêche les saints.*" She smiled and turned again to go. "Barbara will be thinking I've had an accident—I must fly."

"You have had your 'say'—next time it will be mine," said Ralph, and this time his voice was more natural.

Without another word, they turned to go their separate ways, she to hurry down the little sheep path as fast as she could—he to do as she had meant he should, go back to that place by the old oak, where he and his sister had talked.

Halfway down the path, Catherine stopped. Somehow, here, all among the chalky rocks, shut in by the turn of the hill, it seemed dark and chilly, and a feeling of horrible dismay seemed to be filling her. What had happened to her up there in the sun! What had she done! What awful madness had seized her, there, alone with Ralph, who—oh, she need not hide it from herself, who loved her—to speak as she had done! Her heart seemed to beat horribly hard! What had she done! He loved her, and she knew there was no one in the world she would ever love but this man. She crouched suddenly as she sat there for a moment,

and hid her face in her hands. What had happened! She had been sure, only this morning, that if Ralph Lanescourt loved her, she would be the happiest, most blissful woman in the wide world, and now she knew he did love her, and she had as good as told him to go and bury himself in a monastery! What *had* she said! That she was going to follow his sister's example? Yes—but only in sacrifice. She had no intention of entering the religious life, but if Ralph understood it so, so much the better. He was meant—certainly by all the hopes and prayers of his family—to enter religion. Had she given him that final "push" Barbara had talked about!

She got up at last and descended the hill slowly to Barbara who was in a hurry to get off. "You *do* look tired—I'm thankful I stayed down here. Now we'll go and lunch at that funny little inn, the 'Why Not.' "

Catherine smiled wryly at the name. There seemed something suitable in it just now, and as she passed under the painted swinging sign she repeated dully, "Why not?"

"What a huge query mark they've painted," laughed Barbara, pointing up to it.

"Well, it's a hugely important question, isn't it?" said Catherine, wondering if Ralph had stayed here or was going to lunch here. She glanced round the little parlor where they were to eat the national dish of all English inns, eggs and bacon, and sure enough there was an old knapsack with an R. A. L. on it, hanging on the peg of a door which opened on to a little staircase. As Barbara made straight for the

fire and bent over it, Catherine quietly turned the bag so that the initials were hidden, and hung her coat on the same peg.

"Had you a glorious view—it seemed to cloud a little as you came down?" Barbara was a little chilly waiting, and was wondering whether the "Why Not" could rise to an omelet with strawberry jam in it, a delicacy to which she was specially addicted.

"Yes—it was—quite glorious up there—" said Catherine, "but it was cold coming down."

CHAPTER XII

BARBARA had dropped Catherine at Old Park and they had promised themselves another week-end together before long. No, she could not come in because she had to drive to meet the train at Market Boston, and collect her father, as she expressed it. She was glad to have that legitimate reason, for two or three cars were parked in the distance and she recognized the Carmichaels' gaudy yellow and black, with its vulgar little mascot. Catherine had seen it too, and she decided, as she entered the house, that discretion being the better part of valor, it would be best to get up to her own room and stay there till the coast was clear. She had got to arrange her thoughts too, and decide how she would tell her mother she wanted to become a Catholic. It was going to be difficult, unless she could make it seem natural—but how, that was the question, unless she spoke to her father first.—Dare she? Mason, the maid, hearing she was back, hurried in to light the fire, and bring her tea.

"Aren't you going downstairs, Miss? There's quite a lot of visitors," she said.

"Who are they, do you know?" Catherine asked.

"There's Lady—I mean Mrs. Carmichael and two gentlemen with her, and the new people who took Manor House for the hunting, and Lady Mary Lanes-

court." Mason began to unpack Catherine's suit case, as the girl pulled her chair up to the little tea table.

Lady Mary! She would like to go down and meet her, but could she risk Mrs. Carmichael and her friends —and that invitation that would be thrust on her! She felt that her mother, out of mere bravado, would make much of the Carmichaels' friendship before Lady Mary, and that she would be prevented from any talk with her, if she were to present herself in the drawing-room. It was not worth while, after all, nothing really mattered now except one thing, and if that came to pass— as it must—as it would—why she could "speak with her enemies at the gate" as often as they, or her mother wanted! To-morrow she would go over and see that poor Mrs. Johnson, Larry's mother. She had already been once or twice, and learned more from her calm serenity than all her books had taught her. But she must clear her conscience and speak to her mother first because those visits, and that talk with Father Melford yesterday, were in express disobedience to that angry injunction that had been given her. He had told her that it was almost impossible that she had not been baptized as a babe in her father's church, but she had shaken her head and declared that it was not so—that her mother hated all religions so intensely that she had determined to bring up her daughter quite "unshackled." And he had advised her to ask her mother, not only as to whether she was or was not baptized, but for permission now to receive instruction.

For a long time she sat there: the room became dark, and the fire burned low. There were such dreams to

dream—such visions to see in those red embers. All her life seemed to have been leading up to this—a great star in the East, a great parting of the ways, and yet, to have it all come at the same moment as it were! Ralph—and all that might mean—and Father Melford knew nothing of that vision on the mountain top. (Catherine smiled a little at her grandiloquent way of thinking of it!) He knew nothing of Ralph Lanescourt and his coming into her life—or did he? He seemed to know more of the human heart than anyone she had ever met, and she supposed Ralph saw a great deal of him. What would he say when she saw him next, and told him all the wonderful things that had been happening to her? And why was she feeling so ridiculously happy? Was it because she knew Ralph loved her, or because she knew she loved him—or was it because of a deeper, more amazing discovery, that she "belonged" heart and soul to Something, to Some One who would never let her go. And Ralph too—if he followed that path that was so much more glorious than her own—what a golden destiny for them both—with the best gift they could offer, in their hands—their own hearts. Nothing matters—only that, she thought to herself smiling in the dark. And then the door opened brusquely, the lights were turned on in a blaze, and Chris came in.

"Well, my dear, you might have come down! I hear you've been here quite a long time. What are you spoiling your complexion for over that fire? You are quite flushed. Had a nice time?"

Catherine drew up a chair for her mother and Chris flung herself down in the cushions.

"Quite nice—can I turn some of these lights out and let's have this shaded one—then I'll tell you all about it." Chris yawned and clasped her hands behind her head.

"Anything you like—the shaded lights suggest amorous confidences, but you couldn't have met anything amorous at the Maynard's I'm sure. Oh, how tired I am! If it weren't for that mad Pat Carmichael and her crew I should die of stagnation here." She smiled a little at the recollection of the conversation, and Lady Mary's dignified amiability, Pat's noisy volubility, the newcomers' ignorance of the situation and their remarks on Sir Arthur Boston when he had hunted the Manor Verdon Hounds: Mrs. Carmichael had "played up" most amusingly, and the two men with her had aided and abetted. It was only when Lady Mary had made her adieux that they had really let themselves go, and the newcomers, being let into the joke, had excused themselves easily, and had joined in the loud laughter.

Chris yawned again.

"Well, Catherine—hurry up. By the way, we're hunting to-morrow, you know. The meet's at Yarford Hall—it ought to be a good day. How's Barbara—pity she's so lanky. Did they do you well?"

Catherine laughed. "Rather, Mother! When Mr. Maynard's away Barbara orders all her pet dishes—which he hates—and the cook evidently thought I was to have the fatted calf—" She was wondering how she was going to begin. It certainly wasn't in the Maynard's cuisine.

"That's the way to lose your figure—and death to

any complexion—and that's all Barbara has, a good complexion," murmured Chris. She was feeling quite drowsy and tired by this fire, but it must be getting late and she and John had to dress and dine five miles off—bother—but it was worth while, there would be bridge till pretty late. And then to-morrow, a long day's hunting, and that new hunter looked a bit of a devil when she mounted him the other day. There would be some sport. John wanted her to ride her old mare. Such an idea! She was only good for funeral processions—and that bay suited her admirably— What was that Catherine was saying——

"—and I had a talk with Father Melford."

Chris opened her eyes.

"What's that, Catherine? Where did you meet him?" she said sharply.

"We drove in on Sunday and I suddenly thought I'd go to that church—but there wasn't a mass——"

"A mass!" Chris repeated the words almost unconsciously as if she were trying to remember what they meant. Catherine hurried on—"And coming out I met him and Lady Mary Lanescourt—Mother—Lady Mary told me something I didn't know, that father—my own father, was a Catholic."

Even the shaded light showed Chris's white face and blazing eyes as she sprang up from her chair.

"It's a lie! how dare the woman talk of him to you!" she cried.

"He—wasn't—a Catholic?" Catherine almost whispered, a dreadful feeling of loneliness suddenly beginning to fill her.

"He was far too clever to be one! Do you hear

me? He was not a Catholic!" she reiterated, as if trying to convince herself, and Catherine saw the diamonds flashing on her mother's clenched hands. Why was she so disturbed?

"But had he been brought up one?" she asked in a low voice. Chris darted an angry, suspicious look at the girl.

"Most Frenchmen who haven't the sense to break away from tradition think they are Catholics. And now be so good as not to refer to this again——"

"But, oh, Mother, do please tell me some more! If he was a Catholic when I was born I *must* have been baptized. Was I?"

Chris controlled herself with difficulty. She put a hand on the table beside her, actually to steady herself, and in a voice almost hoarse with anger, she spoke, coldly, fiercely, and every word dropped like melted lead into Catherine's heart.

"I tell you again, he was *not* a Catholic, and as for you, do you suppose we were going to let you be baptized into a Church he had foresworn and which had condemned him? Now—are you satisfied?"

There was a moment's silence. Catherine's eyes, more than ever like "saucers" as Barbara had called them, were fixed searchingly on her mother as she got up from her chair.

"So he apostatized!" she said as if to herself, and Chris shrugged her shoulders.

"I should like you to say I may, but in any case I must belong to that Church," Catherine began and was interrupted by Chris who had broken an ivory paper cutter.

"Belong to that Church? Are you mad or just a fool! If you dare to disobey me, I'll have nothing further to do with you." She turned to leave the room and then, stopping short, she flung out, "And remember you haven't a penny except what I allow you—your father left nothing—but waste paper!"

"Papers, Mother—might I have them?" Perhaps she would find the truth there—there was certainly some mystery. She could not believe that her mother was willfully lying, but if her father had been a good Catholic as Lady Mary said, there must be something in his papers, perhaps, to explain—something anyhow that would reveal her father to her. Foresworn! Condemned! The words froze her!

"Waste paper I tell you! Don't make any mistake, they weren't of the nature of bonds or securities! And they were burned long ago. And understand, Catherine, there is to be an end of this nonsense. Next week you are going to the Carmichaels' and if that doesn't put you into a saner frame of mind, I shall pack you back to Mademoiselle Maudon for a year or two."

She left the room, and Catherine continued to stand where she was, staring dully at the door that had closed behind her.

"Did he die like that?" she wondered, and thought suddenly of Larry Johnson's little still room, of the "loosing" of his sins Father Melford had promised him, to be ratified in heaven—of the prayers that had followed him, of the masses that had been said for him, a young, innocent farmhand—of the quiet confidence of his mother in the merciful kindness of God.

And her father—if it were true, it seemed to her as if an angel had fallen from heaven! To go out—in the dark—like that, with such a sin on his soul! Apostasy! She was not yet a Catholic, but she knew there was no graver sin. How was she to learn the truth about it all?

"At any rate, I can expiate for him—no one can stop my doing that." And then slowly a thought came to her as she stood there in the middle of the room. Why worry? If all that had seemed so natural and beautiful to Toulon's world for instance, to Father Melford's, to Lady Mary's—to Ralph's world, were simply not her world, something which had no part in her, not for her—why strain after it? Why not just "carry on" in the world her mother provided—perhaps even marry Ralph, or would her mother object to that? But then—why even then, it did not really matter what happened, if this wonderful faith that had been so long in coming to life in her, were shattered: her father, a clever man, had discarded it—was it then just a great shelter for the weak, but a Church strong men put behind them, and disregarded? How she wished she could ask Toulon—of course Father Melford would not quite understand her, but Toulon would. She thought of Ralph again. He had not "said his say" yet. If she told him—what? That she had had a foolish sentimental dream, in which she sacrificed her love—and perhaps his—to his call to sanctity, but that now she had awakened to the reality of things and—oh, never! She hid her face in her hands and suddenly began to cry. It had been no dream she was sure, and anyhow, better to follow a star than a mere glowworm! She

had gone through a good deal that day, and now she felt as if she had been caught in a whirlpool. She would stay in her room, and Mason could bring her a tray later on; it was not likely her mother would come in again—she thought she heard them descending the staircase. There was a knock at the door, and Colonel Lambeth put his head in. Catherine tried to hide her face which bore marks of her tears, but he saw and came in, closing the door behind him in spite of Chris's voice crying:

"Oh, do come, John, we're late enough as it is."

"Cheer up, my dear," he said, patting her shoulder, "try to get rid of all these morbid fancies. Your mother is naturally annoyed—you're always such a sane, sensible girl—" He smiled, and Catherine, drying her eyes, smiled back at him.

"Well, I was never saner or more sensible than I am now," she said quietly, "but thank you for coming in."

He looked at her anxiously—she certainly seemed calm, except for the sign of tears. Chris had said she was "quite mad"—but there seemed no reason to call her that. Of course, it *was* mad of her to talk of becoming a Catholic, but girls got moonstruck now and then, and you needn't take them seriously.

"Well, get to bed early—we'll be having a long day to-morrow. And, Catherine"—he turned again as he got to the door—"I'll try to get you out of that Carmichael invitation—but leave it to me." He nodded and Catherine thanked him, smiling again at his kind, severe face that always seemed to promise strength and yet belonged to such a weak person.

Colonel Lambeth was full of the best intentions, but had succumbed long ago to Chris's overruling. Whether it was by special providence he was plastic enough to seem to choose the form of life she preferred, or whether there were subtlety in his amiable conformity, his friends could never tell, but the result at least was satisfactory. Chris liked to have him "in waiting," not merely docile, but encouraging her whims and fancies, ready to fall in with most of her moods, a faithful admirer always at hand—a person easily neglected if he were in the way. There was a possibility that he might take on the hounds—the present old M. F. H. was anxious to give them up, and it depended, of course, on Chris whether he accepted or not. If she were to shut up Old Park as suddenly as she had opened it, after such a long absence, it would be impossible, or any rate not convenient. The kennels could continue to be at Yarford —an excellent arrangement, Catherine of course would be very happy—she liked hunting and country life, but somehow she did not fit into his and Chris's scheme of life, and there were moments when he began to see it from another point of view. There was something in him that disliked to see the Carmichaels, for instance, touch her—and as for Carmichael himself, John wondered uneasily for a moment how Chris could entertain the idea for a single instant, of letting a girl like Catherine go and stay in his house.

"All right my dear—I'm coming," he shouted, in answer to another scream. Women were curious cattle.

CHAPTER XIII

Henri Toulon had stayed well into the winter in his little Pyrenean chalet, writing, as he always did down there, with a vigor and inspiration that dragged when he had to do it in Paris. It had been a severe season, with heavy snow on the mountains and bitter frosts by nights. The stillness of the world in that little place, he loved. Just now it was particularly blessed, but he knew Solange was longing to get down to her little warm cabin in the village where she could hermetically seal doors and windows, and repose after the agitating occupation of evolving in her brain and producing on the stove the dishes that her master would eat.

She supposed it was some internal disease, or at least a form of mental weakness that made a strong grown man sit, pen in hand, writing, writing, writing—or often sit just doing nothing, staring for whole hours it seemed to her, at the Pic du Midi or some other point against the sky, or more often lost in mist and snow. And then getting him to eat his food! Some days there was not enough in the house to satisfy him—then she would provision the place wildly and extravagantly from the village—or he would go to the other extreme and live on the "smell of his inkpot," as she expressed it, for days at a time.

So when he told her one day that she could begin to shut up the house as he was going to Paris, she looked up from the carrots she was shredding.

"Very good, Monsieur. How does Monsieur find the soup in Paris?"

Toulon's eyes laughed but he answered her gravely that it was poor stuff in comparison with hers, and as for the omelets—they were not to be named in the same breath with the delicate golden inspirations of Solange!

Solange pursed her lips up—that was as it should be—but a pleased look settled on her wrinkled face. She knew her points. "Doubtless in a big town like Paris there are not many fresh eggs. Does Monsieur keep hens for laying?" she asked, and Toulon admitted that he deprived himself of poultry, to his unspeakable loss.

It was only when he got to the little station at Argélès that he found Solange had sent in with his boxes a basket with two hens and a young cock, as a delicate contribution to the restricted ménage of his Paris home. Toulon glared wildly at the clucking creatures in their cramped quarters, and then called the chauffeur who had driven him in, "Take those things and do what you like with them, but don't let Solange know I gave them to you," he said, and the man thanked him and assured him she should never know.

He smiled as he thought of his little *appartement* in the heart of Paris, and then he folded his arms and gave himself up to enjoying the view from the window. They were rattling down a line beside which the Gave

flowed, just now very turbulently because of the very heavy snows from the peaks. On either side, the flat valley, of fields and groups of trees, was bordered by high hills—on the one side green and wooded, though now and then rugged and precipitous, on the other stern frowning hills that were gray with slate, or grim and forbidding, with here and there some mountain torrent falling in silvery cascade. They passed under the Pic du Ger with its great cross at the summit and its little funicular creeping like a white beetle up the steep gradient, and presently, in the distance, Toulon saw the white-gray spires of the great Basilique at Lourdes, the gray old château on its impregnable rock. After a short stay in the station, the Grotto itself in the distance could be seen. It was many years since Toulon had visited Lourdes. As he raised his cap and stood by the window, he promised himself another visit there when he should be down again. He was not sure if he believed very greatly in Lourdes, but he liked to feel that it was there for him to attend to when he had the time—that others, more believing than himself had seen, or experienced, great spiritual graces and wonders there. A bend of the road put the place out of sight, and for miles the train followed the troubled river, with the hills and woods beyond it, till the snowclad Pyrenees, at first so near, got further and further away, and by the time Pau was reached, were only a dim white line against the darkening sky.

He reproached himself for his delay in having had any communication with the lady whose address Jeanne Clavé had sent. He wondered if it could be the Mrs.

Lambeth he had met at Lady Grant's. For the moment he did not connect her daughter with little Marie Dolores of the church register at Caussac—his mind was entirely taken up with the thought of the recovery of that manuscript. A certain *Revue* had already had an article in it on de Gardeville's earlier books, and as if to point triumphantly to his later position, the party he had allied himself with had announced a new edition of his last works, those which had been condemned. It would be a glorious answer to their machinations to be able to publish that manuscript he held, with its last chapter of Salvation, and proclaim to the world that Gaston de Gardeville had made his submission and his *amende honorable* while still in perfect health, before the fever could have rendered him weak and open to influence—as the enemy might declare was the case. The last thing he had done yesterday, was to write to Lady Grant and beg her to ask Mrs. Lambeth to permit him to call on her when he should be in London, as he hoped to be in a week or two.

Much as Toulon liked to find himself back in Paris, he thought it had never been so distractingly noisy. Perhaps the stillness of Gèrac accentuated it and made the place seem almost unbearable at first. He returned one morning from a walk in the Bois de Boulogne, and standing for a moment by the Unknown Soldier's grave, he was accosted by a very fashionable young woman.

"I call this really mean to come back from your lair in the wilds and never tell us!"

Toulon smiled as he recognized his *filleule* Céline, now Madame Lacour.

"I refuse to be reproached," he said, looking down at her with an amused air. "I have suddenly realized I'm an old man who needs a certain amount of sleep, and since I have been back, Paris has refused it me. I am trying to get into training again. How goes life, Céline?"

They had crossed at last, and were slowly descending the Champs Élysées.

"But you must take something to make you sleep, of course! It's horrible, white nights! Have you been to see—oh, but I know you haven't. Let's go now and find Father and Mother—there are always amusing people to meet at the studio. Tell me, what is your new book about? You know I can't understand them a bit because I'm not clever." She rattled on, giving Toulon no opportunity to ask her again how "life went." And once in Bertron's big studio she left him to the welcome that her parents never failed to give him.

"And what lion are you committing to canvas now, Bertron?" Toulon looked round at various easels most of them discreetly hidden. One however, stood out with a strong light falling on it. A man's figure, one hand behind his back, the other resting dictatorially on a pile of papers, manuscripts, placed on the end of the writing table by which he stood.

Toulon had good sight, but something made him get his glasses out and fix them very deliberately on his nose. Then he walked slowly up to the picture.

It was a face suggesting a certain force, a certain power, but the small eyes too close together, the lines of the mouth that made one look elsewhere for the promised strength, gave the impression of something wanting. The man himself seemed to be vaguely conscious of it. He stood, Napoleonically, to be admired by his admirers who numbered thousands, but to the rest of the world, seeming to search for and to be conscious of their certain and unequivocal criticism—or condemnation.

"This is a far cry from the Cardinal," observed Toulon dryly. "When I went away His Eminence was adorning your easel."

Bertron shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"What will you! One has to make one's daily truffles and *vin extraordinaire*—one's bread and butter, *en effet.*" Toulon smiled, and a man who had been talking to Madame Bertron turned sharply toward him.

"Etienne Moret will live long after the Cardinal's memory is as dust," he said in a voice that evidently struggled to be polite. Henri Toulon returned his glasses slowly to their little case. He was busy thinking. These visitors here in the studio—they had not been familiars of Bertron's last year. One was an author of undoubted repute—of a certain class of book, whose contributions to journalism had added zest to the buffooneries of political "scientists" who assumed *"la direction morale de l'Humanité."*

There were two young deputies, one of whom had been mainly responsible for a new "scientific" history,

which a fraternal government had decreed should be taught the French child, with a view to wiping out the history of what had constituted the glory of France, and inculcating only the privileges of pure Republicanism. Among other things, hatred of their kings, scorn of Napoleon, and, keynote of all, "We do not know scientifically if there is a God, or whether indeed there is no God at all." Excellent nourishment for *"les petits Français,"* thought Toulon, served up by free-mason schoolmasters become deputies. He remembered having been told of the school mistress in a village in one of the departments who dictated to her small girls:

"The Family. The family, such as we understand it to-day, the base of society, did not always exist as we see it now. We owe to the French Revolution the happy changes which have been produced in the position of the home."

His eyes turned to a further group. Little Madame Lacour was listening with a rather bored expression to a young exquisite, the Duc de Germainville, who was known to be a fervent admirer of Etienne Moret —leader of that party in distinct opposition to authority and under the ban of the Church. Toulon felt he had rather disturbed a family gathering—he, the most declared Catholic of the French literary world, whose word had weight with friend and foe alike.

"Your bread and butter ought certainly to turn to hot buttered toast or even to truffles and champagne with clients of this order," was all he said pleasantly, turning his back on the portrait.

"À propos," broke in the man who had prophesied Moret's immortal fame, "I hear we are going to have a reëdition of de Gardeville's later works. His cult is coming to the fore again. His credo, or rather Moret's, has attracted more Catholics to the Cause than—let us say the good Cardinal's has done. Parbleu! I am a good *républicain* and not of his party like our friend Bertron here, but he is a power—and adversity is always good for a cause."

Bertron looked annoyed at the mention of his name and broke in loudly, "De Gardeville? A fine lad! Like a young Greek god! Ah, who was it you used to say he was like, Toulon? One of the select company of saints—I forget which. I made a sketch of him one day—the day he came to tell me he was engaged to be married."

Toulon was listening intently to all the chatter. So they had set up Gaston as one of their fine promising specimens, only taken from his place among their future leaders by an untimely death.

This studio was no place to tell them how de Gardeville had died. Even Bertron had joined those who repudiated conformity. He would wait a little longer to give the history of his death, and when he did so, the book he had left in his hands should be published, with that chapter of Salvation which Toulon felt certain contained the recantation of his errors.

"I wish you'd let me see that sketch you speak of," he said, and Bertron went to some folios and searched.

What a young god! A rather long oval face, but

of such regular features, and of such alert beauty, such an arresting power in the eyes which looked at one gravely and yet had a glad laugh in them! He had just come from the woman he loved—no wonder they laughed, gravely, gladly, triumphantly! And the dark, close-cropped hair brushed back, that had an obstinate little crink in it. Toulon used to tease him about his *coiffure à l'Anglaise,* but de Gardeville had said it was quite the best fashion that came from *"perfide Albion,"* and continued to go to his English barber. And suddenly the thought of that little English girl—no, French, surely—this man's daughter, came to his mind. How he must have loved her—what he must have suffered, and what each of them had missed in losing each other! Toulon looked again at the face—the laugh seemed to have gone, there was something of fateful gravity, brooding purpose in the steady eyes that looked into Toulon's. Could a man like Gaston have a child and not transmit his ardent faith, his chivalrous nature, his *fury* of admiration and love for the Church? That child had been conceived at least during his loyalty. The woman's influence had been accidental—passing, but Toulon had to acknowledge, powerful for Gaston's fall. How would the girl fare? He found Céline had come up to him, and he turned with a little regret from the portrait.

"What a handsome man! Who is he?" she said.

"Do you remember my telling you about a man who lost his faith and died? His wife, I told you, was a foreigner, and had no religion," said Toulon, in a low voice.

Céline nodded. "Is that the man?" And Toulon bent his head.

"How goes life, Céline?" he asked, for the second time, and Céline shook her head.

"You have to be an exile sometimes, before you know how much you love your country," she said in a low voice, and Toulon understood.

"*He* got back home before he died—" was all he said, and looked at the picture.

"Are you sure? Why don't you tell them?" The others were making too much noise, talking and laughing, for her and Toulon to be overheard.

"Wait," was all Toulon said, but he noted Céline's whispered, "I don't know why I should be glad, but I am. I find I'm a bit of the opinion that—as a Frenchman isn't a natural colonizer, neither is a French Catholic. It's unnatural, foreign to his nature to leave his religion, or his country—don't you agree?"

"Bravo, Céline!" said Toulon. "I not only agree, but——"

But the girl added, "All the same don't mistake me." She hurried her words, "It's only theory, not practice with me—yet—you know——"

CHAPTER XIV

CHRIS sat up in bed extremely pleased with herself and with life generally. She was, for a rich woman, quite absurdly elated with her winnings at bridge last night. To-day was the most popular meet of the season, and the weather was perfect. The scent would be good, her new hunter rather an unknown quantity, but the general opinion of the stables was that he was a bit of a devil and Chris promised herself the joy of mastering him. She was a superb horsewoman, and no one was quicker to realize it than Spitfire when she had ridden him last week. She let him cavort, and curtsey, set to partners with bridges and passing trains to his heart's content, but when he got annoyed that she lent herself so calmly to all his antics, and tried to throw her, when he refused a water jump and decided to bolt, she suddenly entered into the lists and showed herself master of her horse and of the situation. Yes, no doubt about it, Spitfire was quite a big bit of the devil—but he was all the better for that!

She tossed her letters to one side—and called Smith to take her tray. Smith picked up a letter that had fallen on the floor, and Chris frowned—she wanted to get her bath and dress. She glanced at the delicate handwriting—and the London postmark, and opened

it. It was a short note, but she made an angry exclamation as she read it.

"Insufferable cheek!" She flung it after the others, where the maid found them and placed them neatly on the writing table, while Chris, a slim figure in her orange silk pajamas, went to her bath. When John met her coming downstairs later, in her smart riding suit—the very latest cut in breeches and the trimmest of huntresses, he thought—she looked not much older than Catherine, though she certainly looked rather cross this morning! He wondered what had annoyed her. As a rule he was not left long in ignorance.

"Got your flask?" he said and she made an impatient gesture, as much as to say that was not her business—of course it would be in the saddle pocket.

"I want to write a telegram—give me a form—" she said curtly, and the servant put the necessary things before her on the table. She threw her crop and gloves on it as she stooped down and scribbled:

Lady Grant. 4, Royal Gate, Kensington.
Regret cannot see Toulon shall be absent.

"Let that go at once," she said, and followed Colonel Lambeth who was waiting at the open door. For a moment she stood on the steps as she drew on her gloves, looking at the familiar scene—the horses, held by the grooms, impatient to be off—Catherine slowly exercising her horse up and down the avenue—how pretty she looked, and what a good seat she had! What an absurd idea this was that was slowly creeping into her head, that the dead past—or what she had

thought was dead was beginning to stir uncomfortably around her! Well, she had succeeded with Gaston; she was not going to be daunted by a slip of a girl, her own daughter—she would be equal to all occasions, but—Toulon—what did the man want? She was certain he did not know she had been Gaston's wife—that it had been *her* he had fought against in his efforts to help Gaston—*she* who had armed Gaston against his influence and the affection and force of Toulon's letters—*she* who had conquered! And she would again! How Gaston had admired him! She had been furiously jealous. And now Catherine had made a cult of the man and his works, and was poisoned as her father had been! What did Jane Grant mean by saying Toulon had requested the great favor of a private interview with her? She shivered a little as she settled herself into the saddle—perhaps it was Catherine's boyish figure astride her horse, the little hard hat that hid her hair, that made her suddenly look so like, so very like Gaston. What a splendid horseman he had been, and her eyes fell on the worthy John who was getting a little heavy in the saddle; he mounted stiffly too, but he rode well as became an ex-cavalry man. As she rode down the long drive behind Catherine, it seemed almost impossible not to believe it was Gaston before her, though why she should think the resemblance more striking to-day than usual, she could not tell. It seemed so strong when Catherine turned round in her saddle and made a laughing remark about something, that Chris suddenly began to think in French, which she had not done for many years, and

then, angry with herself for such folly, she began to talk to John.

But Yarford was only a mile away, and the narrow highroad took some negotiating, with its constant passing cars, its led horses, and its enthusiastic bicyclists all making for the old Tudor house where the meet was to be. It was quite the most popular one of the season and certainly the most picturesque. As Catherine reined in Bobby on the great drive before the house and turned to admire the hounds, she found Ralph Lanescourt talking to one of the old huntsmen behind her. He saluted her gravely, and brought his horse up nearer. For a moment she thought of the Trysting Oak and what they had talked about there, but it seemed so far away. How well he looked in pink—what a lovely day it was—what a glorious world!

"Going to hunt Morscarp Woods?" she repeated as Ralph spoke. "There's bad country the other side, isn't there?"

"We shall head away from the quarries—your horse knows the country?" asked Ralph.

"Far better than I do—I haven't explored that way yet. Bobby was born here," she laughed.

There was a babel of voices all round them and she heard Ralph hailed by old Lord Yarford who was hobbling about on two sticks among his guests as he had done for years, too infirm to ride, but a youth still in his love of life, and men, and horses!

"Eh, eh, what sort of a horse do you call this, Ralph? Where's your old roan hunter—" The old

man's eyes ran up and down the mare while Ralph bent, laughing to defend his mount.

"The roan hunter is Roger's—and this is the best I could find at home; she'll take all the gates and water jumps like a bird, sir."

"You should let me mount you when you come home, my lad. Ah, but that good lady on that mettlesome bay has got her work cut out for her. I don't like the look of her beast——"

Ralph followed Lord Yarford's eyes and agreed with him that Spitfire was too showy—Lord Yarford muttering, "And the woman on him—with her painted lips—they're much of a muchness, I'm thinking. Ha—you're off. Good luck—good luck!"

There was a great field that day. Catherine even found Barbara on her old cob, looking longer and lankier than ever in an ancient habit that had seen many seasons.

"Toby's too fat to hunt but we can follow for a bit. Gracious what a crowd! I lost Father long ago," she shouted as Catherine came up alongside. Ralph managed to get near again; he had never lost sight of the little gallant figure on her big horse since Catherine had entered the grounds of Yarford.

"We are hunting the Felton coverts first—what a ripping picture it all makes, doesn't it?" He smiled suddenly like a boy, as he turned to look at the procession of riders following them down the long drive.

"Yes, it looks—now the hounds are out of sight, as if we were a new Canterbury pilgrimage." They both laughed gayly—and he quoted, half to himself:

"'Knights—of the willing vassalage and chivalry of Christ.'" Catherine heard, and the words came again to her mind later, and pleased her. Just now, those who meant serious hunting—and she and Ralph did—were already pushing on, and their horses soon got separated again. Once, when she was in full gallop across some fields, making for a dip in the hedge that she had seen others take, he came up again and, passing her, cried:

"Follow me!"

For a moment she felt inclined still to take that dip—but another wave of his arm decided her to follow, and in a minute she was putting Bobby to what seemed a stiffer jump than the dip had offered. But once on the other side she saw the reason. Two of the horsemen who had taken it had found a nasty trap in the way of a watering pond with greasy banks, and Catherine smiled at their condition as they pulled their horses out of the mud, and mounted them again. She waved her crop as Ralph turned once, but the hounds were in full cry and he was far ahead. Halfway through the afternoon Bobby began to show signs of having had enough, and Catherine, who never wanted to be in at the kill, turned to come back at her leisure. She had ridden hard, but when those who had them mounted their second horses, and followed on into the Morscarp country, she knew Bobby could not do it. Barbara had given up long ago, or at least the fat cob had. So Catherine jogged slowly back a much nearer way than they had come, sending word to her mother by a woman who had a fresh horse,

and who was eager to be off, that she had gone home.

"Rotten if they kill in the quarries," she heard some one say.

"Oh, Tony's too good a huntsman to get near there," was the reply.

"Yes, but you're on them before you know where you are."

"Beastly bit of country," shouted some one else. It seemed almost turning tail to come back now, but Catherine had no choice. She had had a glorious run —it had blown cobwebs away, and her thoughts began to bring a happy little curve to her lips. But Bobby had to be cheered up. He wanted a lot of coaxing, and stumbled once or twice.

"Haute la tête!" she cried, smiling, as she pulled him up, and began to think suddenly of Toulon. It had been announced that he was about to publish a new book; she must watch the papers to see when it appeared. She wished he might know how his books had helped her, but of course what was it to him, a girl's appreciation, when all the literary world admired him!

They got to Old Park at last, and leaving Bobby to his "well-earned rest," Catherine passed through the hall and glanced at the letters. None for her. She would go and fetch her book she had left in the drawing-room and then enjoy her bath.

The servants had drawn the curtains and lit up rather early, thought Catherine, as she crossed the room, her gloves and crop in her hand. And then she

stood still, for suddenly from a deep chair a man's figure sprang up and a voice exclaimed, in French:

"My God, Gaston de Gardeville himself!"

"Monsieur Toulon!" Catherine could hardly believe it was he, but that he should speak of her father! How extraordinary! She held out her hand, and Toulon bowed over it, annoyed that he had been surprised into such an exclamation. He explained his presence:

"Lady Grant kindly wrote to say I would call today. The butler said he thought you would all be back about this time, and insisted on my waiting."

"Oh, yes—yes. Mother and Daddy will be back quite soon—but do please tell me why you spoke my father's name when I came in? You knew him?" She stood slim and straight before him, an eager smile on her face, and Toulon wondered again that he had not guessed long ago, on that first day he had met her, her relationship to his old friend.

"I knew him and loved him, Mademoiselle. I did not know till recently that you were his daughter. Do you think—" he hesitated a little as he looked at her, "do you think I may venture to speak about him to Madame your mother? Lady Grant wrote to arrange it for me."

What Lady Grant had done was to leave it till the last moment and then, in her letter of that morning, simply announce the fact that "that charming Monsieur Toulon was staying near Old Park and would call," as he was very anxious to consult Chris on a certain matter. Toulon knew nothing of the wire, and

Catherine knew nothing of the letter, but she suddenly felt that some old mystery was waiting to be solved, and that if her mother refused help, she would beg Toulon to take her into his confidence. There was a troubled expression in her eyes as Toulon spoke.

"I think she does not like to speak of that time—but if there were some real reason, she would of course listen to you." Toulon did not say that it was he who wanted to listen to Chris, he wanted her to tell him about de Gardeville's papers—if those manuscripts existed, if he might read them, publish them.

Suddenly there seemed to be sounds in the house, as if several people had entered the hall, the sound of heavy, measured steps. Catherine turned as the door opened.

"Here they are!" she said, expecting to see her mother.

A servant threw the door open wide. Catherine did not hear his agitated, "An accident, Miss!"

What she saw was her mother being carried on a stretcher across the wide hall. A rug had been thrown over her, and above it, the closed eyes, the white drawn face, and the painted lips, scarlet like a splash of blood.

CHAPTER XV

COLONEL LAMBETH stood with his back to the great fireplace in the hall, his hands clasped behind him. He was staring up at the gallery, waiting, with Catherine, for the two doctors to leave Chris's room. A clock somewhere struck midnight, and Catherine moved restlessly in the big chair that almost hid her. They had waited like that for more than an hour since Sir William Lenton and two nurses had arrived from London, with Dr. Keeling from Market Boston. They had not talked much, and when they spoke it was almost in a whisper.

John had told the girl that Spitfire had taken fright at an explosion in the quarries and had bolted. They had seen Chris, who seemed to have him in hand, trying to steer him away, but he was bent on mischief and not to be held. They saw him rise to take a clump of gorse bushes—and disappear. Catherine caught her breath and John said, after a moment's silence, "Spitfire had his back broken—they shot him—" and Catherine had suddenly shivered and whispered, "Oh, poor mother!" But she had controlled herself presently and though she had not been allowed to go into the room while the nurse whom Dr. Keeling had first brought and Smith had undressed her, she had busied herself with the housekeeper in settling her

stepfather's room next door, and the dressing room beyond, for the two nurses who were arriving. Sir William Lenton, the great surgeon, could not get back till the six o'clock train in the morning, and a bedroom had been prepared for him. She had told Smith to put in the Colonel's room Mrs. Lambeth's big writing table, and the maid had suggested more removals; the nurses would want plenty of space.

"Nonsense. What? No—the jewelry can go into the safe—but don't give me her letters and things to see to, I couldn't. Let her writing table be put in your room—and you can see to the other things later," Lambeth had said, distraught and jerky.

A door opened and shut softly up in the gallery that ran round the hall. The doctors were leaving the bedroom, and one of the nurses followed. They stood speaking in low voices, and John and Catherine watched anxiously, hearing nothing yet listening intently. Then the nurse went into the room again and the two men moved further away along a corridor and talked for a time that to the two waiting down below seemed endless. At last, they turned and very slowly descended the staircase. Sir William came first, playing a little nervously with his watch chain, Dr. Keeling a few steps behind him, observing the two white faces waiting to hear the verdict, noting Catherine's little sudden gesture toward her stepfather. She had caught the strained look on his face, and something made her slip her hand into his arm as the doctors stopped before him.

"Well, Colonel Lambeth," began Sir William

abruptly, taking the chair Dr. Keeling pushed up, "I fear I have not, just at the present moment, a very good report. There is a grave injury to the spine, and to the back of the head. There are lesser injuries which in themselves are not fatal, but which add to the sum total of the seriousness of the case. At a word from—er—ah—Dr. Keeling, in whom I have perfect confidence—I will come down again to-morrow night."

"Is she conscious?" John asked. He knew it was a foolish question.

"Oh, that you must not expect just yet. There is grave concussion, and it will be a long immobilization. You have two of my best nurses, and if more are wanted I will see that you have the most skilled."

He went on gently discussing the case, answering Colonel Lambeth's questions as to whether she would live—if it were an injury she could recover from—if she would walk—be active ever again.

"Ah that, Colonel, depends on her vitality, her resistance, a great deal. I can only repeat, at this stage, that it will be a long, possibly a very long immobilization."

After that day life seemed to stand still at first. Old Park took on a somberness, a stillness that had been foreign to it since the arrival of "the family." Catherine, under other circumstances would have loved the quiet days, the freedom of the woods where the brown leaves had fallen and rustled crisply as one walked in them. Now, she only felt that the impotence of the imperative woman lying in her deep unconscious-

ness upstairs was filling the hours with a dull pain that nothing could relieve. Colonel Lambeth himself, as some one had said of him, after a visit, was like a gaunt lamp with its light out—the connection broken. One took into consideration the shock and his grief, but there were those who were amazed to find him so suddenly emptied.

Lady Mary had met him, and talked of him to her husband. "I never thought him clever—but he seems to me now like a—like an orange sucked dry—" and after a little silence she added slowly, "She had begun the same process, or I should say, she had the same influence on poor Gaston, but, fortunately perhaps for him, he died. I have often wondered how, or where, but I never heard."

"A very dominating woman, with so much vitality that, now it is in abeyance, her husband seems almost as unconscious as she is," said others who had been to Old Park to see John Lambeth.

Catherine had begged the nurses, and the doctors, to let her help to nurse her mother, to watch at night, to do *something*. But they smiled and shook their heads. Later on, she could do things, but for the present she was only allowed very occasionally into a darkened room, to stand for a moment by the still form in its white bandages, and to softly kiss the covers as the nurse motioned to her that it was time to go.

Coming downstairs one day, straight from the sick room, she found Ralph Lanescourt standing at the foot and waiting for her. It was the first time he had

seen her since the accident. Catherine came down slowly, deliberately, and as she put both her hands into his, outstretched to take them, she said with a little catch in her voice, "I wanted you, Ralph."

He pushed her gently into a chair—she looked horribly white and drawn, as if that vision of her mother, who had ordered her destiny for so long, and was now impotent, had taken some virtue out of her, too. There was comfort in Ralph's mere presence—he would understand. There was a key they both held to some sanctuary that she felt was awaiting them, and somehow, after Ralph's first words of sympathy, she knew by his voice that he was sure of himself now—sure of her too. She told him of her days, of her mother, of the doctors' visits, of her stepfather's helplessness and misery, and with the ghost of her old gay laugh she said:

"So now I'm finding a vocation—not like the one of the mountain top."

"Don't you make any mistake, Catherine—we choose our own mountain tops and fit our own desires to them and call them visions. And often God brings us down into the valley of the shadow of death and we find the real inspiration only on our knees in some Gethsemane. That is the real vision."

It was a stronger Ralph than the man who had looked down the vista of human love, on the downs that morning. There were deeper lines about the fine sensitive mouth, but the restlessness and pain had gone from the gray eyes that smiled at Catherine. He sat forward on his chair, dangling his cap in his hands,

while Trot the little fox terrier waited, ears cocked, for the psychological moment to seize it.

"There doesn't seem to be any inspiration or vision about it to me—except that up there—on the downs—I accepted with both hands whatever—should come." She would not use the word sacrifice. He thought she had chosen up there, the religious life. It was best he should think that still. Her voice, low and steady, just stated a little bald fact as it were, and for a minute or two there was no sound but the ticking of the clock.

Ralph continued to dangle his cap, his face bent down. He was thinking rapidly. A week ago, a few days ago even, he had seen the future so clearly: Catherine becoming a Catholic, with this new-born resolve to follow the vocation she evidently believed was hers; he, after such long delays and hesitations, after such excuses he had made to himself, to enter the priesthood that had drawn him, held him, terrified him. But now, here was a new situation. Catherine would never leave her mother now. It was said that Mrs. Lambeth would be a cripple for life. Catherine probably would, if she had the courage, and he didn't underrate her, become a Catholic. Ah then—that altered everything—or did it? His heart beat suddenly very fast. There would be nothing to prevent him telling her—telling her— He drew a long breath as he straightened himself suddenly. If he played about with this thought he was absolutely unworthy of his ambition, no better than a craven coward.

"Heaven never takes back our 'Fiat'—of that I'm certain. I think we're apt to put our own labels on

God's gifts. I've been putting my own miserable tab on something He gave me long ago—*wanting* to misunderstand what I had to do——"

He stood up now, and took a few steps toward the window. Then he turned again toward her, his hands behind him—she need not see them. "Something else He sent too, Catherine. He made a heavenly little signpost of you, to give me the right direction. I've been vacillating too long. I am going to be—or at least to offer myself—to be a priest."

That was the hidden sanctuary then, whose key they held. Yes, her sacrifice had been accepted then. He must never know. Catherine stood up, sudden tears in her eyes but almost a laugh in her voice as she held out both hands. "Oh, Ralph, it was *that* I loved in you!" she said, unconscious of all she admitted.

He took her hands, smiling, "We are children of the same *'patrie'*—and that's what I love in you. I knew you were a gift from heaven for some special purpose, and I wanted to put my own label on you——"

He hesitated a moment for the right words and Catherine broke in with the happy dignity of a woman of the world and the woman who had her own vision, "There's no mistake, is there Ralph? One just *knows!*"

"Yes, one just knows," repeated Ralph, and then Colonel Lambeth wandered distractedly in, and rang angrily for the servants to take Trot out of the house —his playing annoyed him and his bark might disturb Chris. But it would have taken more than Trot to disturb the woman who lay upstairs.

"Good-by—don't let go that gift whatever happens," said Ralph later as he shook hands with her. He spoke in a low voice, but Colonel Lambeth after saying good-by to him, had gone up the broad staircase. He liked to sit and listen to the silence of the sick room, on a chair outside Chris's door.

"Good-by—" said Catherine, with a happier smile than she had had an hour ago. "My immediate vocation is to wait—but even that seems a glorious career just now."

When she was alone again she stood for a minute quite still, and the smile died out of her face. His was going to be the great life of service, of sacrifice —of fulfilling himself. Hers—no—her way seemed confused, dark, not what she had felt drawn to. Hers was to be here, at home, as long as her mother needed her, and that would be all her life. And the doctors said she was paralyzed, from her waist to her feet. Yes, indeed, for her, Catherine, she would make her "waiting" a "glorious career," but she must see Father Melford soon. In the meantime she found herself charged with many new unaccustomed duties, and she was glad when Colonel Lambeth, angry at the numbers of visitors, insisted that a daily bulletin be put on the gates of the drive, and callers requested not to drive inside. The long walk on foot to the house successfully deterred most of them. There was all Chris's trivial but immense correspondence to attend to, and all her papers to be put away. And then there was John himself, who had to be cheered and supported and companioned to an extent Catherine found more

exhausting than anything else. He came and sat in her room one morning as she wrote at her mother's table, answering some of the more important letters that were waiting to be attended to. It was useless to turn to him to advise her on certain questions, his look of distress and vexation when she asked him anything about Chris's engagements, made her take the responsibility on herself. There was a drawer full of little notebooks, old checks, old pass books——

"I needn't go through anything else need I? These drawers are full of old checks and foils and these notebooks," she said, turning to her stepfather who sat by the fire with the *Times* upside down in his limp hands. "I'm sure mother would hate us to touch them."

"Oh, burn the checks—yes. Better look and see what's in the notebooks. If you think they'd better be kept, keep them. She may want them when she's up again." He had done a great deal of her writing and accounts, and now he was glad to hand it over to Catherine. He turned the paper round, but his head presently fell over it and he slept. Catherine made a selection of the checks, and threw some into the fire, but fearing to disturb her stepfather, she took up the notebooks. Quite small they were. Evidently to do with earlier days as Catherine found none for the last ten years. Nothing of any importance evidently—a few notes as to the places she and John had been to, the people they had met: one note amused Catherine:

Dec. Sent off Catherine's Christmas presents. Amuse her more at school than being with us.

It had probably been more amusing for Chris, spending Christmas at some country houseparty, to be free of Catherine than to have to stay in London for the little girl of eight or nine.

Catherine took up another "day book," from the back of the drawer and opening it at random read:

Sept. 19—Those idiots sent me Gaston's papers. I told them to burn everything. Sent them to attic till I can look at them —unless I burn everything unopened. Better not do that.

Catherine turned the little page, but the next few weeks were blank. Then one line, laconic in its brevity. "Fixed up with John." It was a few months before her second marriage. She turned back the pages—and found notes that made her heart beat fast.

Aug. 30—Sent a wire to Caussac to say I would send for Catherine next day. Hear she's at Larroust—Horrible road for car. Don't intend to go to Caussac.

Caussac! Surely that was the name of the little village she had painted from above—the water color her mother had torn in half. All the pages were not written on—there were blanks. Then:

July 1—Wired to Gaston to leave Caussac and join me at Biarritz. Simply refuses. Evidently furious with me.

July 3—Wire from Gaston saying Catherine is in safe hands and away from contagion. I wired to tell him she'd better stay there then, as I was going yachting with the D—S.

July 21—Found telegram a fortnight old when I got back to say Gaston ill. Wired to inquire.

July 23—Evidently G. not so bad, as I am not to risk infection.

Then came a long blank, till late in August of the same year there was an entry.

Answered the curé's letter by wire to Caussac, to the effect that there is to be no cross on G's grave.

Catherine found her face wet with tears. She wiped them away quickly, and looked for earlier daybooks —but there was only one, and with very scanty notes in it, just mentioning the towns they had visited—in a long tour. Two entries attracted her attention.

G. tried to persuade me to reconsider. Might as well try to move the mountains.

Hate to see a man cry. Sickening sight. But stood firm and G. at last gave in. My trick.

There was a knock at the door and Mason came in. "There's a gentleman come who—" Catherine put up a warning hand, so that her stepfather's sleep should not be disturbed. She took the card Mason handed her. Ah—Monsieur Toulon! How glad she was.

"I will come down at once," she said, pushing the little books into the drawer. As she left the room followed by Mason, John woke up.

Presently he came up to the table, and opened the drawer Catherine had shut. Perhaps he had better give the poor girl a hand—no good keeping old checks and foils and suchlike. What were these? He opened one, and frowned gloomily as he read. He took up another, and the frown became deeper.

"Certainly it wouldn't do for Catherine to read

these—" he muttered, and taking two or three in each hand, he stirred the glowing fire and made a bonfire of them. Then he went on, emptying the drawer, and finally, ringing for Mason to tidy up the fireplace where everything had been destroyed, he left the room with the comfortable feeling that he had spared "the child" some painful information which Chris had always kept from her.

Catherine had not seen Toulon since the day of the accident—he had called once or twice before he had gone back to London, but he had come down again, hoping to see her. He almost expected the greeting she gave him, as she held out her hand with a smile that belied the look of tears in her eyes.

"Monsieur Toulon—I want you to tell me what it was you came specially to see mother about, the day of the accident."

CHAPTER XVI

For a moment Toulon stood, holding her hand, looking down at her, his steady, deep-set eyes under their black, strongly marked eyebrows, seeming to pierce through her, searching for the real reason of her demand. It was not enough that she had just Gaston's look, his manner, even some of his little tricks, like that catch in her laugh that lit something tender in his own eyes when he heard it—or that little twitch of an eyebrow that attracted him once or twice. He had noticed it the first time he met her. How often he had teased de Gardeville about it! No, these were all more or less to be expected—purely external. But how much else of Gaston had she? How much of that mother of hers? Toulon privately apostrophized them all as *"ces femmes!"* but he was already making a large exception of Catherine.

And as she looked up at him, she felt suddenly that quite apart from her admiration and veneration of him as a man of letters, there was something of her father's love and reverence in her for this beetle-browed *Gascon* with grim, severe face that changed to such tender kindness when he smiled. The thought that he was a friend her father had bequeathed to her put a new force into her who had been so friendless.

"I know so little about him—my own father—but I heard the other day that he was a Catholic. If it hadn't been for your books, that news would only vaguely have interested me. But you opened a new and lovely world, and now—now, I find my father belonged to it—that he was in it, and of it! I am so glad to—to tell you a little how grateful I am!"

She had withdrawn her hand, but still stood facing him. As she spoke his face softened. A tremendous gratitude—a great sense of relief filled him, and gave depth to his grave smile. He *had* failed Gaston: he had almost failed himself, but he had helped Gaston's child, and assuredly his old friend had saved him, Toulon, by his noble heroic end. This had been, then, the pattern designed, when God's looms had apparently broken the de Gardeville thread, finding it tarnished. But like some silver stream that runs for miles under earth and rocks and mountains, it had emerged again, clear and shining, ready to be worked into the pattern that had been intended from the beginning of time. Surely the *Sainte Vierge* and her handmaids watched over those tapestries, unraveling the knotted strands, gilding with gold thread the dark places there needs must be. Catherine's hesitating, but unaffected, words warmed Toulon's heart.

"You almost repeat some words your father once said to me," he said slowly. "I had laughingly told him that I had a little metal statue of St. Anthony that reminded me very much of him, except for the shaven head—and that I used to look at him for inspiration when I wrote. Your father took it quite

gravely and said, 'Yes, that's it. You write for me, you write *to* me. I feel it.' "

Catherine's eyes shone, though the tears were not very far off. "Did he say that! But it has seemed so exactly like that to me, that sometimes, when I came across bits I couldn't quite follow, I almost wrote to tell you to remember I was ignorant—and couldn't quite understand—not being a Catholic either."

"But of course you are a Catholic—make no mistake about it," began Toulon, touched by the girl's words, and a little astonished.

"I—am—a—Catholic? Say it again—or, no, you are mistaken, my mother—" Her eyes searched his face, an eager troubled look succeeding the first joyful surprise at his words.

"But nothing—no one—can alter the fact that you have been baptized as a babe in Caussac church where I have seen your name in the register. Now, my child—I am going to treat you as a sort of child as you are certainly a legacy left me by your father, and you admit yourself that I brought you up—" he smiled, as Catherine was pushed gently into a chair—"can you bear to hear some painful things—with a happy ending?" he asked, thinking only of Gaston. And Catherine thinking of the ghastly revelations in those notebooks and her mother's words, thinking of the broken woman upstairs, repeated slowly, "With a happy ending?"

Then with a quick smile she added:

"Yes, tell me all you can. After all, now I know I *belong,* I can bear anything."

So Toulon began at the beginning, drawing a picture of Gaston as he had known him—eager, ardent, most lovable, with great gifts of mind—talents that compelled his contemporaries to cite him as the coming genius, so that de Gardeville had gibed and mocked them in a fury of brilliant witticisms which had only added to his reputation. For he had been always too *sensible,* and knew it, and fought against it. It was the artistic in him that was hurt at criticism whether good or bad, and in those early days it had been always laudatory. Even then he shrank from it. He had said once, after raging over a paper that had praised one of his books, as he thought, too fulsomely, "It is as if I held the woman I loved in my arms, and some one shouts, how beautifully he makes love—what passion his face expresses!" To him, said Toulon, his gifts were sacred. It was his stumbling block. Catherine sat rapt and motionless, her hands clasped, her eyes not losing an expression in Toulon's face, her ears not missing an inflection, a hesitation in his words. This man had known and loved her father. Toulon went on in his terse quick French.

There had been many political friends too, and de Gardeville's brilliant journalism brought him to the front. Great pressure had been brought to bear to persuade him to turn his talents in the direction that smiled—at first indulgently, then pityingly, on his Catholic ardor. Toulon did not speak of how the young man's friends had planned the marriage with the rich English girl who had no troublesome religious scruples, but whose money would be a very useful asset

to their party: a young woman who might be depended upon to break him of his Catholic "habits." He only told her what he knew—that he had been out of France when that happened: that he had read his last story in manuscript and understood that de Gardeville had lost his faith and given up its practices.

Then he spoke of that "chapter of Salvation"—his own halt till he had known of Gaston's heroic death, and the wonderful discovery at Caussac. He kept Mrs. Lambeth's name out of the recital—he was going to refer to her as little as possible, and so it was perhaps that overstrained reticence that led him to omit—or to overlook, or to forget—what Jeanne Clavé had told him, that Chris, at the time of her marriage, had become a Catholic. The thought of Gaston himself flooded out anything lesser—nothing mattered except to place him again on his pedestal, and to bring relief and comfort to his daughter.

Catherine, as he finished speaking, stood up, her eyes making him think of Gaston's when he had been greatly moved himself—"Lamps before the High Altar" he had called them, in his mind. It seemed to the girl as if something suddenly responded—more—corresponded to the soul of the man who had so debonairly taken his faith for granted and then been beaten back to work out his salvation alone. It was as if she saw him and heard her mother's voice deriding his forces, undermining his defenses—yes, all that—but he had won through, he had made good, he had won! How she loved him!

"And I thought I was alone," she said, following

the train of her reflections, and Toulon realized how much the words admitted.

"And you 'belonged' all the time," he retorted, smiling, but his strong kind face looked strangely moved. This girl had linked up in a wonderful way all the old charm of love and admiration, of generous pride, of a common faith, that had bound him to Gaston, and in the breaking of which bond he had suffered so much more than he had been conscious of at the time.

She asked him many questions which the reading of those little notebooks prompted.

She would lock them up until they could be burned, not knowing that they were already smoldering on the hearth. Toulon had come now to the reason of his visit. Did any papers exist which could be examined, that would lead to the finding of that last chapter, that "chapter of Salvation"?

Catherine remembered her mother's words, that she had burned all papers. But had she? That note in the daybook said she had sent the box to the attic. Yes, but surely the old housekeeper, Mrs. Meade, had spoken of the bonfire which her mother had lit in her bedroom grate and which had nearly set the chimney on fire? Surely, oh surely, God wouldn't let that chapter be destroyed!

"History seems to repeat itself," continued Toulon. "There is a strong political Catholic party in France which has been condemned by the Holy Father. They have been reëditing your father's books, his later ones, but not his last ones. Those had gone too far for them—he had got beyond them into a spiritual nihilism

which shocked a section of them. But just now one can't take up a review or paper without some reference to him, in praise, or in reproach, according to the views of the journal. I want not only to vindicate him, but to save others from the same pitfalls." He looked down at the girl who was listening intently—not missing his meaning, feeling as if she were receiving her real baptism and awakening to her real nationality, as if she were taking on herself the joy and duty of a daughterhood that life had never before granted her. And like the scent of lovely forgotten things hidden in the crevices of a rocky mountain climb, there came the thought—a Catholic Frenchwoman! That was what she was—or must be! She would help Toulon to restore her father's name to its rightful place: she would sacrifice everything—everything—to look after her mother, but from this day on she would be Catherine de Gardeville, a Catholic—and, with a little shiver of pure joy as she thought of her father—a Frenchwoman! Toulon watched her face as she stood still, letting all the new wonderful, disturbing thoughts pass in review before her.

Then the glow seemed to fade. What did it matter whether she were Lambeth or de Gardeville if Ralph had been free! But that was what she had to sacrifice. There was her mother! and there was her father, Gaston de Gardeville, *debonair prud'homme,* saying to her, *"Haute la tête! C'est nous la France!"*

She turned shining eyes to Toulon. He thought something had been added to her mental stature since he had seen her last.

"Oh, forgive me. I have been dreaming—you have been telling me such great things. Yes—that chapter shall be found—if it still exists. It's possible it could have been destroyed—by accident!" There was a little unconscious appeal in her eyes as though she would protect her mother. She went on:

"Will you tell those who—who lost him, and those who *used* him, how he died?"

"Yes, we will do that. I wanted first to let Mrs. Lambeth know what I intend to do. Perhaps—that chapter hasn't the same importance now that I have the Caussac records." It was almost a question—in any case just a suggestion to Catherine that if she were not to find it—it was a hundred chances to one that "that woman," as Toulon thought of her, had destroyed all papers—he could still reinstate de Gardeville.

"Surely it is very important if the story is his own experience, and ends, as you say, in such desolation. The mere title of it he gave—to you—implies triumph. His last book, too—never published yet, to appear at this moment, when the books of his shaken faith and his irreligion are being reëdited— Why it would reinstate him as nothing else could!" Then another thought held her.

"You have read it, Monsieur—the manuscript you hold? It is a history that can be read by all, of his own actual life? Nothing that—that touches—his family?" She could not bring herself to say "my mother," but Toulon understood. She was brave, valiant, an admirable woman, this daughter of de Gardeville, worthy of her race.

"The general reading public would have no idea that it had anything in common with the author's own life, certainly. The story centers round a man—who is not married. It is more a political tragedy than a novel, but there is nothing in it that would be an indiscretion for his family to publish. There are a handful of men in Paris who will know their own responsibility, and there is a party in France who will say, ah, de Gardeville escaped us, after all! Those who knew and loved him, and their name is legion, will sing *Te Deum* for his submission—and his noble death."

After Toulon had gone, Catherine sat for a long time where he had left her. It was one thing to have found her father—to discover him, this wonderful, gifted, lovable man who had tilted, and fought, and lost, but who had so magnificently retrieved and made good, and won! But it was another thing to have—no, not lost her mother, but to have the rose-colored veils that hid the real woman, rent from her. Her father must have loved her greatly to have given up everything for her! Toulon had given a passable reason for her mother's flight from Caussac, but he had told her, with an emotion he could not hide, of her young father arriving at the church one morning with the little daughter in his arms, demanding baptism for her, and guidance for himself. Did her mother know? Had anyone ever told her? In that case, she had spoken the truth—or at any rate she had not lied, when she said Catherine had not been baptized. Later on, when she could bear to be told, Catherine would tell her, but now, now, she would double, treble her love and care for the mother for whom her father had sacrificed

everything. "This is going to be my vocation—Ralph was right—I'd put my own label on what God gave me——"

A few minutes later she stood beside her mother's bed. The white bandages covering the head, leaving only the face exposed, made Chris look for a moment, thought Catherine, like a nun lying asleep. Then the eyes opened, but consciousness had not returned and Catherine was glad when they closed again and the glassy stare was hidden. She wanted to kneel, and tell her mother many things, but the nurse on duty was there, so she whispered them instead, promising all her life of love and service, of work and sacrifice to bring about the change in her that her father must have prayed for.

After lunch, she followed Colonel Lambeth to his study. He liked to have her there, to read him bits from the papers. He had no interest he said, in politics, since they were in the hands of the man in the street. In his day the man in the street was a vagrant and treated as such. In these days he was as much considered as the Blue Book. Catherine could read the leaders on other subjects—and then turn to the army news, though even that had lost its old *savour*.

But she had something to say before he should have time to nod his head and shut his eyes and doze.

"Daddy—I can't get Mother's permission now for something I am going to do. So as I don't want to hide anything, I must just tell you—" she began, and John Lambeth looked at her, frowning a little. Of

course, some love affair, but why did the man leave it to her to tell him!

"Young Lanescourt?" he said gloomily, thinking it was a most selfish thing for young people, and especially for Catherine, to be thinking of marriage at this awful time.

Catherine stared at him for a moment and then a quick flush and a little laugh relieved his mind.

"It has nothing to do with him—nor with any other man," she said, smiling. "I find I was baptized as a baby in the Catholic Church. I am going to get Father Melford—to 'reconcile' me, I think it is, and——"

"Ah, I used to tell your mother I was certain de Gardeville had circumvented her," remarked John dryly, seemingly not very startled.

Catherine let it pass. She had another request to make, and she did not want to hurt her stepfather. He had always been just and kind to her, he had often stood between her and her mother.

"Would you mind, Daddy, if I were known by my own name? It can come about gradually, but if you would help me in this, it would be easier?"

John Lambeth moved uneasily in his chair, and played with a paper cutter.

"It doesn't seem the right time for all these changes with your mother helpless," he said at last.

"No, I wish it had been any other time," Catherine replied gently, "but it is only since the accident that I have known these things. I had made up my mind to ask her—to tell her—" Catherine corrected herself, "that I must be a Catholic, before all this happened.

Now I know I *am* one, why—it makes all the difference —and she had once said that if ever I married, it would have to be under my own father's name—so I don't think that will be a—great—difficulty."

Colonel Lambeth looked keenly at her.

"Sure you're not thinking of marrying just yet Catherine?" he asked kindly. Catherine stretched out her hand to him.

"Quite sure, Daddy. I shall never marry, and this morning I made a promise by Mother's bed, that I would never leave her as long as she needed me." John covered her hand with his and pressed it.

"God bless you, my dear. Yes, do what you want —I'll stand by and answer for your mother," he said.

CHAPTER XVII

"FATHER, I have come to anchorage, as you said I was to."

Catherine stood up as Father Melford entered the sitting room at the presbytery, where she had gone to find him. He looked keenly at her, as she spoke: what exactly did she mean? Ralph Lanescourt had not mentioned her name, but in the great decision he had come to, Father Melford had felt the power of this girl's influence. Who could have imagined it, a girl brought up in that milieu, educated, as he was told she had been, in a purely pagan manner, and thrown at eighteen into a set which had been described to him as "vicious." Well, well—the Spirit bloweth where it listeth—and, after all, she had the blood of Catholic ancestors in her, though her poor father had apostatized—so he had been told.

Catherine unfolded her story, as Toulon had told it her, and Father Melford sat forward in his chair, his hands folded on his knees, not interrupting her, hardly looking at her: tempted for a moment to come to her aid when she had to tell of how she came to be left behind at Caussac, but silent again as she spoke of it naturally, as if there had been no other course for her harassed young mother to take under the circumstances. Another of God's sure mercies! On what a frail thread, humanly speaking, had hung the possibil-

ities of this girl's restoration to her inheritance, or even of her father's repentance. And yet—why not? Was not God sufficient for His Godship—had He ever failed? It was we who failed in our conception of Him: we who measured His patience by the limitations of our own—His love by the indifference of our affection, His purpose by our own vacillations. And this woman—she seemed to have gained in years since he had talked to her last—this woman had been the point of contact that had speeded Ralph to the course that was undoubtedly his, the course he had been having scruples about, the vocation that, in God's mercy, if it were really one, had not been withdrawn because of the boy's extravagant humility. This girl—the daughter of that Mrs. Lambeth! No, he ought not to think of the poor woman like that. God forgive him.

"So you see, Father, I can't wait any longer," she finished a little anxiously, as he still seemed to be listening to some one else, not to her. But he had missed nothing of her story. He had marveled at her long, lonely quest of the "Holy Grail," marveled at the tenacity of her love which had not known itself for love, but when he had learned all, he understood. After all, it was not for nothing the Church put her mighty seals on her own, at baptism: not for nothing Christ had said that what She bound on earth, should be bound in heaven. Catherine had received the faith which gives eternal life, and though she had been ignorant of it, it was there, a hidden source, waiting, like the healing waters of Lourdes, to be revealed at the given moment.

"And will you teach me from the very beginning, because I am very ignorant."

Later on Father Melford reflected on Catherine's confession of ignorance, and thought of the cultivated, prepared field ready for the seed that was to be sown in its rich unconscious soil. And he contrasted such ignorance with the neglected condition of mind that cultivates nothing consciously, except waste places for the deposit of life's rubbish. Oftener, he thought, people made little frail balconies, or like the old lady who "saw life" from the top of a London bus, they contented themselves with watching, from a reasonable distance, the successes and failures, the aspirations and downfalls of others. "The passing show" was sufficient "life" for them—even such as can be found in the back alleys of a pauper mind.

It seemed to Father Melford that he had wandered through some old-world garden, rich in flowers and blossom and sunshine—at times the very richness had made a little confusion—and sometimes the right tools were either wanting or their use just waiting to be understood. But through all the profusion, the little stream, like a silver ribbon dropped from heaven—the little stream that had had its source in the baptismal waters of the font at Caussac, trickled and flowed, feebly, but with sufficient power to keep the garden from dying. He had only to point out the right tools —to clear away useless plants, to teach her the science of that living water—and she would "strengthen her cords, and enlarge her borders," till she was veritably the garden where God loved to walk. In such a gar-

den, no, He would not wait till the cool of the even. He would tread the dewy grass in the early morning with His pierced feet, and lift the drooping lilies to the morning sun. In the glaring midday, He would not leave it—for the water of life was there. That was what the Church did, the very desert brought forth roses, with such a stream of heavenly irrigation.

As Catherine left the little church one day, after having had an instruction at the presbytery, she met Lady Mary Lanescourt. She had heard nothing of them lately, and something had prevented her asking for news of Ralph from Father Melford. To-morrow she would make her first general confession, and perhaps, then—she would ask—or perhaps, Lady Mary would speak of him.

"I heard, my dear child, that to-morrow is a great day for you—" began the older lady, taking Catherine's hands in hers. "I came to ask you to let me be present."

They were standing in the little porch and the fading light fell full on Lady Mary's face. There had always been a kindly expression on the handsome distinguished features, but something had given her lately a look of peace and serenity that struck Catherine at once.

"That will be very kind of you," was all she said, and there followed a little silence that was full of question and answer as the woman and the girl looked at each other.

"And I was afraid for Ralph!" thought the older woman. "After all these years of my prayers and disappointments, of my sacrifices accepted gladly for him,

it is the one thing I feared for him that has been his salvation—not my doing, after all!"

"How could heaven resist such a force as his mother's prayers! How glad I am—" thought the girl, and met Lady Mary's kind eyes with a clear look as she presently said:

"Ralph will rejoice for you. He is just now in London." The words sounded banal, commonplace, but the eyes told Catherine as plainly as words could, the thankfulness, and joy that had at last come to her. This girl whom she had feared a little, whose home and environments had been anathema to Lady Mary, had done in a few days, what she, his mother, had been praying for all the years of Ralph's life.

Just as she turned toward the gate where her car waited, she took Catherine quickly into her arms.

"You will understand one day what I feel—not only about Ralph, but about you," she murmured. Catherine smiled happily.

"I think I understand now—" she said gently.

At the last moment John Lambeth had suddenly decided he would be present when his stepdaughter took upon herself such a tremendous responsibility. It would lessen the severity perhaps, with which Chris, when she heard the news later, would visit her daughter—for of course she would be very angry and quite rightly too! But these Catholics! Once they had a hold on you—and a young girl too—they never let go! John sat gloomily beside her as she drove her little car along the road early the next morning. She was to make her general confession, then in the church

her profession of faith, to receive there the absolution, and to assist at Father Melford's mass and make her first communion. She rather wished John had not come.

"You'll live to rue this day, my dear," he said in a sepulchral voice. "You little know what you are letting yourself in for."

"Dear Daddy, don't worry," she laughed, and as they passed Larry Johnson's cottage, she looked up at the window of that little room that had been a landmark in her life—the room from which she had viewed that citadel!

It seemed very still and peaceful, John thought, as he waited in a back seat of the little church till Catherine came in and knelt before Father Melford at the altar rails. He had an uneasy feeling that he ought to be standing behind her, in a frock coat, with a white buttonhole. It certainly never occurred to him that he should kneel, like the few people who were present. Lady Mary Lanescourt, for instance, and the Squire who was making the knee-board creak with piety.

Presently Catherine went back to a seat, and in a minute or two Father Melford began to say mass. People came in, quite a crowd, Colonel Lambeth thought for such a small place, and it was only just half-past seven and a cold morning! He supposed it was curiosity—the excitement of "Miss Lambeth's conversion!" He made an impatient movement—how furious Chris would be! What a mad thing for him to have acquiesced—was there time to stop it? After all, the girl wasn't of age. He ought to have put his

foot down, but he knew he had long ago given up the habit of that form of pedestrianism, and that he had nothing convincing to say except to repeat the remarks he had thought suitable to use in the car, on the way here—and they had not sounded very convincing, even to him.

As soon as the first person left the church, he rose and went outside, busying himself with the motor. He was cold and hungry and beginning to feel rather alarmed at the seriousness of "the business," as he called it to himself. He seemed to have waited there a long time, a little annoyed at the curious glances cast at him as people passed, coming out of the church. He recognized one of the gamekeepers, an Irishman, and hailed him. In a sufficiently loud voice he said:

"Murphy, go and tell Miss de Gardeville we must get back." The man looked puzzled as he touched his cap.

"Miss—Miss who, sir?"

"Miss Catherine. Miss de Gardeville of course. Her own father's name. Ah—here you are, my dear—" he continued still sufficiently loudly for the stragglers to hear, as Catherine came out, followed by the Lanescourts. A woman came up to her—John could not hear what was said, but he heard Catherine's, "Thank you, Mrs. Johnson," and he noted the Squire's friendly handshake and his, "Good-by, Miss de Gardeville—God speed you." The two men stood for a minute or two talking as Catherine and Lady Mary spoke together in low voices. John replied to the Squire's inquiries about Chris. No, she had not yet

returned to full consciousness. Once or twice she had seemed on the verge of it, and had appeared to be on the point of speaking, calmly and quietly, but she had gone off again into the state of coma that had been her condition since the accident. The Squire was touched at Lambeth's changed appearance, his resigned melancholy. For an instant he laid his hand on the younger man's arm as he said:

"You've done a fine thing this morning, Lambeth, and it must have been a hard one for you. It will bring you a blessing, of that I'm sure." He hurried away, leaving John looking dully at the place on his sleeve where Squire Lanescourt's hand had rested. Blessings? These pious people had a vocabulary not in use in John's world. Bring him a blessing? He wouldn't know what to do with such a thing—unless of course the man meant good luck and Chris's recovery.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SHAFT of light from the setting sun straggled through the half-drawn curtains of the deep window in Chris's room, turning the giant tulips on the table into scarlet flame. It rested on the slim boyish figure of Catherine as she bent to touch them with her finger, one knee on a chair, in spite of the fact that her riding breeches were well sprinkled with good Westshire mud. She suddenly thought of it and stood upright, gently flicking the seat with her crop, and turned to glance at her mother before going to her room.

Chris lay very flat in her bed, the head low, and for a moment it seemed as if there were only those two dark burning eyes in the room. They were fixed on Catherine, but with a new, wonderful expression in them. The girl came up to the bedside with a quick happy step and then—"Gaston—oh, Gaston, such a vile dream I've had!" Chris's voice, in French too —speaking in a gentle caressing tone that Catherine had never heard. Slowly, to give—as she thought—time for the poor clouded brain to understand that it was not the young husband she had loved so long ago, but her own daughter, Catherine bent her head to kiss her mother. Chris raised her arms but let them fall again quickly. "God, how that hurts! What have

I done, Gaston?" She took one of the girl's hands and rubbed her cheek softly against it.

"Just something that means a quiet rest for a time, darling," murmured the girl in a low soothing voice, hardly conscious that she too, had fallen into French. How her heart beat! Of course in a minute her mother would see or hear that it was she, Catherine, and not—anyone else. But Chris was searching the girl's face, and her hands were stroking the gauntleted hand that Catherine had not ungloved. The other arm was round her mother's head. She *must* see! She *must* know it was not—not her own father!

"You see now, don't you, Gaston, it wasn't worth while? You said—what was it you said about the stars—I forget, but no one can keep his contact with life, good red-blooded life, and have his head in the stars. You're a fine man, my little Gaston, but you aren't tall enough for that."

A little crooning laugh as she mumbled over the hand against her cheek, and Catherine prayed that the nurse might come in.

"Why don't you speak to me?" There was an impatient note in Chris's voice, and a sudden thought beat furiously in the girl's brain. Dare she question her about those papers of her father's—would it be fair? But it was to free his name from reproach! She had to decide quickly. She must, she must help him towards those stars again! But she would speak as naturally as usual, and use no endearments or device that could help the delusion that she was Gaston.

"What became of the papers—*Maman?*" She

threw in, for honesty's sake, the *"Maman"* and for the moment she thought that her mother was at last conscious of her.

"You know I hate you to call me that!" Catherine's hand was pushed impatiently away, and then caught again. "What papers? You write so much— Papers everywhere—yes, I'm burning papers, Meadie, I thought I'd locked that door——"

The voice trailed off, but Catherine's hand was still held. She kept her position for a few minutes, thinking her mother had fallen asleep, as her eyes were closed, but as she slowly and gently withdrew her hand Chris opened them again, and held Catherine by the gauntlet.

"I thought I'd locked that door—locked the door —you must lock out everything— If you don't lock doors, you aren't safe—Gaston, you must lock out things, and throw away the key. It's the only way —lock out—" This time, Catherine was able to move a little away from the bed. Chris had turned her head away and had lapsed into silence again, and Nurse, hearing voices, had hurried in from her tea in the next room. With a quick look at her patient, she followed Catherine to the door and they stood for a moment in the broad gallery that overhung the big hall below. Catherine briefly explained what had happened—that her mother had taken her for some one else who had died many years ago. She supposed it was the dim room perhaps, but Nurse shook her head. Anyhow, as Nurse turned back into the sick-room, Catherine went along to her own, feeling a little

dejected. She had learned nothing. She was no nearer the discovery of that lost manuscript than she had been an hour ago, and the little scene had depressed her. She sat on the edge of the bath waiting for it to fill, contemplating her blue shoes with a little frown on her face, and thought suddenly of Ralph. Where exactly was he? What would he have advised her to do? At any rate she would talk to Meadie—Mrs. Mead—the old housekeeper, and ask her—no, after all, she wouldn't. All she would ask her would be for the keys of the long gallery under the roof, where she knew many things were stored.

An hour later, she found Dr. Keeling just arrived, as she went down to the hall. Colonel Lambeth had left him to see a gamekeeper who had been sent for, and Catherine asked him to wait a minute before he went upstairs. The doctor stood warming himself at the fire, but his quiet eyes behind the gold-rimmed spectacles got glimpses of his patient's mind as Catherine explained something of the conditions of the time that her mother had been living over again, and told him of what had happened.

It was curious. There had been a long period of coma—that was due no doubt to the concussion, with probably a clot between the skull and the brain. Nurse had said that once or twice some words had been spoken in French, she thought, but lately the restlessness and pain had been so intense, she had followed his instructions and given morphia. And now, after the longest period of apparent consciousness, there had been this distinct obliteration of the years, the

taking up of a thread dropped eighteen years ago. Some part of her life that had made the deepest impression on her, something she had never lost sight of—joy—sorrow, or more likely something that affected her conscience. *That* would not fade—*that* would be one's last conscious thought, one's first one on regaining intelligence.

"You were in your riding suit—breeches, not habit?" he asked suddenly.

"Yes. Perhaps in the fading light I looked like a man—I have never seen a portrait of my own father, but I believe I am rather like him."

Dr. Keeling glanced at the graceful figure in its dainty little silk jumper and short skirt, at the delicate oval face, with the dark hair and beautiful eyes of almost Spanish type.

"Come into the room now, with me. If your mother speaks to you as she did this afternoon, carry on—reply as you feel will best please her, as if you were the man she takes you for. Can you do it?" he asked plainly.

"Yes, let us go," was all she said. For a moment she thought of confiding in the doctor. He was an old friend, kindest of men—but—after all, no. She had no right to use her mother's feeble condition even for her father's sake.

A shaded electric lamp gave a subdued light as they approached Chris's bed. The nurse was knitting by the fire, the very room seemed as paralyzed as the bandaged woman lying between her sandbags.

As Dr. Keeling and Catherine came up to the

bed, Nurse rose and pushed her chair back. The little movement was enough. Chris opened her eyes drowsily. "Hullo, Catherine—" she said, and shut them again.

Sir William Lenton came next day, and the report was not encouraging. The lower limbs were entirely paralyzed, the injury to the spine aggravated by concussion and the head wounds. Later on, when the mind was quite clear, and the wounds healed, the patient's naturally resistant vitality would—ah—would —Sir William rolled out his sonorous wisdom as he stretched his legs to the cheerful fire and delicately handled the opulent check in his pocket—her resistant vitality, her vivid—if he might say it, her vivid temperament and mentality would all help the cure which he, Sir William, confidently hoped for, with time! Time, and complete immobilization. Later even—but there was time enough to think of that—later even, a change might be contemplated. The sunny, mild climate of Pau for next winter, say —charming place, with every attraction for the *"valide"* as well as the *"invalide."*

The next day Catherine explored the great timbered attics where unwanted furniture had been stored. She had asked the housekeeper for the keys, and for the first time in her life she found herself in a quarter of the house that was entirely strange to her. It was an immense gallery, lit by two low windows at either end, but just now, as the morning was gray and dark, flooded with the electric light that Mrs. Mead had turned on. There were heavy, carved mahogany four-

posters, one or two standing, some taken to pieces and lying disconsolately against the walls—carved chests, chests of drawers, some inlaid, with mother-of-pearl in an exquisite mosaic, old worn-out brocade and gilt chairs. An old French armoire with a quaint device carved on the doors attracted Catherine. The housekeeper had gone. She was alone. She slowly fingered the old coat of arms on the door of the armoire. A battlemented round tower, and an arm raised above, holding a sword with the hilt uppermost as a cross. The inside was quite empty, but it seemed to Catherine that a faint scent of lavender hung about its deep shelves and she wondered what its history was. What she wanted to find was a box—she believed it was a box, containing those papers that had been sent from Caussac. Some of the chests were locked, but Mrs. Mead had said that all the keys were on the bunch Catherine had brought with her. Others offered no difficulty—they seemed full of old chintzes, curtains, covers, of faded delicacy of pattern that they now try in vain to copy. They seemed very old. Catherine lifted the corners of the folded things and again the scent of old lavender came to her. It was in a large zinc-lined packing case that she made the first discovery. It was a small box, clamped with unconvincing iron, like a schoolboy's playbox of the cheapest order, that Catherine found inside the half-empty case. It had old French labels on it, and one, tied to the little handle at the side, had written on it in an old fine, faded hand, her mother's name and address. At the back was written:

de la part de Mons. le chanoine Garnier
Caussac. Hautes Pyrenées.

Catherine's heart beat fast as she opened the little box. She was going to touch for the first time things that had been intimate possessions of her father, things that, she hoped, were going to help her to reinstate him in the world that had once judged him. There seemed very little in the box! Her heart sank as she took out first a little packet of old letters—marked in a strong clear hand "Correspondence. Toulon." Ah, he had kept his friend's letters—no wonder! Then a Thomas à Kempis, old and worn, a little gold and tan calfbound *paroissien,* with the amazing legend written in her mother's hand, on the front leaf *"A toi, mon Gaston*—Chris." And the date, the day before their marriage! Catherine could hardly believe she read aright. Her mother had then not been—aggressive—at that period, but what did it mean? Then came some odd papers bound with an elastic band, which broke as Catherine took it off. Some little snapshots—one of herself evidently as a baby in the nurse's arms, one or two of Chris smiling and radiant and at last, one, a larger one, of her father, in white flannels, a tennis racket in his hand, laughing at his little daughter who held her tiny hands out from the Breton nurse's arms, crying to him to take her. Catherine's eyes filled with tears though she smiled at the picture. He looked such a boy and yet though the man was laughing, there was something grave about the eyes—something grave in the setting, the poise of the figure. It gave her

somehow a glad feeling that she had loved him even in those days—the little eager arms held out, the strain of the baby figure to reach the loved playfellow. But that manuscript—there was no sign of it here. A few books, and one with the same device on it as had the armoire, the round battlemented tower, the arm upholding the hilted cross and underneath the words:

Nisi Dominus custodierit civitatem, frustra vigilat qui custodit eam.

"Unless the Lord guard the city the watchman waketh but in vain." It was the motto of his family. Gaston had been the first in the long line of Catholic de Gardevilles to dispense with that protection, but at the last, perhaps, his crusading ancestors had stormed heaven for him—or some religious of his line had pleaded her austere life—his young mother her tears and prayers.

Catherine sat for a long time, crouched over the little box. There was nothing else to be found—she rolled the things up, after a time, in a piece of the old chintz, and locking up the chest again, she took them to her room. The best place to put them in would be that top high drawer of the tallboy.

She pulled a chair up, and standing on it opened the drawer. A roll of manuscript that she remembered having seen before, stuck at the back, and pulling it out, she found written in the same clear strong hand, this time in pencil, the words, in French, "the chapter of Salvation," and signed G. de G.

CHAPTER XIX

For a long time Chris lay listening to faint familiar sounds, her eyes shut. When she was sure there would be no chance of John or Catherine coming into her room again that night, she would call the night nurse. She liked the hard-headed Scotch woman—there seemed to be no nonsense about her—a "dour" woman but knowledgeable. There was murmur at the door—Catherine. She heard the nurse say:

"I'll tell her you came to say good-night—she is sleeping. Oh well, yes, take a peep at her."

Chris lay like a statue, her eyes shut, and presently she heard the door shut. John would be later—not much though. Catherine kept him company now, John said; she played and sang to him at night, or they played chess often, a game the Colonel only indulged in on free days at his club. Ah—here he was and Nurse had gone into the other room! She must keep her eyes shut a little longer. But the closed eyes saw him quite well—tall, thin, a little cigarette ash on the lapels of his dinner jacket—he always had it when he smoked alone in his study—his gray hair a little thin too, his face bent over her—she could feel it near her, and knew there was too, a worried unhappy look in the eyes that searched her impassive face. She heard his whispered "Good-night, my darling" and his tip-

toed retreat to the door. He accidentally kicked a chair, and she knew he stopped and turned to see if it had disturbed her. But not a sign showed that she was not sleeping peacefully. Then evidently Nurse floated in again—and went across to speak to him outside the other door. Better keep like this a little longer.

It was the first day she had been really able to marshal all her thoughts together coherently. She had a sufficient collection of them now to form a basis for a talk, and she had saved herself all day for a conversation with the dour Scotch nurse to-night, when the whole house was asleep. This morning Sir William Lenton had been down with another man from London, and Dr. Keeling. She had been too exhausted, perhaps too drugged, to ask much. And she had got to know. Presently she opened her eyes. The door into Nurse's room was open, and its light gave a gleam into her own dim room, where a well-shaded and screened little electric lamp glowed from somewhere behind her bed.

They had changed the furniture a little—her big dressing table had been pushed into a corner—a table that had been always full of cut glass—and vases and bottles, photographs, exquisite and costly bric-a-brac that she collected as a bee collects honey—the table was cleared and covered with a white cloth on which lay dressings, packets of cotton wool, and the usual insignia of a surgical case. To-morrow she would tell Nurse to put it out of sight, and to restore the room to its old artistic order. Her eyes still looked about —searching for something—where had they put her writing table? Absurd a woman could not be treated

for a slight accident without having a furniture removal in her bedroom. What had they done with it, and where were her keys?

"Nurse!"

Nurse jumped at the peremptory voice—it had been a very weak one all day and Chris had not spoken at all through the evening. She had thought her asleep too. She laid her book down, carefully marking the place with a paper cutter between the leaves, though the lurid section of a man's diaphragm which adorned the page would have made it easy to find again.

"Please sit down, Nurse—there are several things I want to speak about." It was certainly not the same voice she had heard lately, though rarely, and Nurse, as she bent over the bed, searched with a keen professional eye for signs that might account for this change. Chris did not trouble to return the look. She pointed to a chair, and as Nurse exclaimed, "Mrs. Lambeth, you'd be better sleeping than talking— Let me put your light out," she repeated. "Please do as I tell you, Nurse. I am not going to sleep until I have talked to you."

"Colonel Lambeth and your daughter came to say good-night to you, but you were sleeping," Nurse murmured as she pulled up the chair indicated and sat down, wondering what her patient could want to talk about at that hour. After midnight it was—but still she had slept most of the day since that painful examination and overhauling—poor thing. But the quiet cold voice with the touch of peremptoriness in it spoke again.

"I want to know the exact truth about myself, Nurse—and I expect you to tell me the unvarnished facts. First of all, how long is it since this happened?"

There was a silence after Nurse told her—so long! Then it was more serious than she had imagined!

"And the injury, Nurse? Broken ribs and collar bones I suppose—what else? My head was hurt, wasn't it?"

Well, it might go at that, thought Nurse. Better for the doctor—or her husband—or perhaps her clergyman to tell her the truth.

"Yes—it was what you say—but you're getting on well now and the quieter you keep, Mrs. Lambeth, and the more you sleep the——"

"And what else is wrong?" The words cut in calmly as if Nurse had not spoken at all. "Why is it my body feels so dead—from my waist down? Did I injure my legs—there's a curious feeling that I *can't feel* them. Is it just passing?"

Nurse clasped her hands tightly and looked at her patient, who was now looking very intently at her. Their eyes met.

"Nurse, I am not the woman you must hide things from—I have to be told everything. Is it paralysis, and is it only a passing phase or what?"

"It's paralysis, Mrs. Lambeth. It's the result of an injury to your spine."

Again a little silence, then——

"And the spine? When that is cured, will the paralysis go?"

"Oh, Mrs. Lambeth, you ask me questions only a

surgeon can tell you—I must beg you to talk no more now——"

"Sit down again please— And answer my question. When the spine is cured, will—or—" Chris's eyes suddenly darkened. Could it be *that!* "Will the spine *never* get cured—is that what you mean?" she said sharply.

This time Nurse leaned a little toward Chris, stretching out her hand, but there was no response on her patient's part and she let it lie there as she said:

"It's a bad injury, Mrs. Lambeth, that takes perhaps years to cure. It means—not walking—for a long time——"

Years to cure! Not walking—Chris's unseeing eyes stared at Nurse's starched cap. She saw herself dancing in London ballrooms till dawn, untired and fresher than Catherine: galloping across country on that incomparable Spitfire—by the way, what had become of Spitfire? She hoped he was being kept well exercised. She saw herself, in the shortest of skirts and the trimmest of brogues, scoring off her brilliant victories at golf: diving at the Bath Club: winning applause for her skating at Princes as in Switzerland. "It means —not walking—" It wasn't possible—*it was not possible* such a screaming, ridiculous, damnable thing could happen to her, Chris Lambeth!

"Do you mean to say, Nurse," she said at last, and her voice sounded as if she had a dreadfully sore throat—"do you mean to say that you've never heard of a cure for this?"

This time Nurse got up and began to pull the blanket into position to give herself confidence.

"There is always hope while there's life—and you have everything in your favor, Mrs. Lambeth. You can do, for instance, what many hopeless cases can't, have every care and comfort that money can give—" Nurse was meandering on, hoping to get out of answering that last question directly—not seeing that she had already done so.

"So mine is a hopeless case?" Quick sharp, incisive, Chris jerked out her words and Nurse realized what she had said. This time, Chris put her hands for an instant on the woman's as she stood beside her arranging the covers—then withdrew it.

"Don't worry. I understand—I shall sleep better now I know. Good-night."

But the Scotchwoman was a little disturbed. She was a kind-hearted woman, and she also had a reputation to maintain.

"You mistake me, Mrs. Lambeth," she said, standing over Chris. "It's not for me to say it's a hopeless case, and Sir William himself has not used that word. I have seen many spine cases cured—in time—but it's meant a 'long lie,' and that is all I'm able to tell you."

"Quite so. Thank you, Nurse. And I think you might switch off this light. I shall sleep better without it. So. Good-night. Perhaps the door might be shut between the rooms. I can touch this bell if I want you."

She lay in the still darkness, alone at last, her eyes wide open—her arms straight down beside her,

wedged in between the heavy sandbags that were to keep her motionless. So this was the end of it all. "It means not walking"—what Nurse funnily called a 'long lie'—She, a cripple! She, carried about from bed to couch, from couch to bath-chair! She, with helpless, dangling legs to be rolled unceremoniously in rugs and shawls, and pushed about into the sunshine and have damned nurses and attendants. God, why hadn't she broken her neck while she was about it—She was certain they had made a mistake—she felt much better. The reason they thought she was paralyzed was that her limbs were stiff with those bags pressed against them—just stiff with the effects of the accident—just the shock—of course Spitfire had rolled on them. Fools not to have realized that!—With a mad energy she tried to raise herself, and her sharp cry of pain brought Nurse hurrying in, to find Chris's face bathed in beads of perspiration and lines about the mouth that she didn't seem to have had before.

"It's nothing, Nurse—give me my handkerchief, thank you—yes, some water." It was lowered carefully to her lips in a drinking cup. As Nurse put it down again on the table beside the bed, Chris said suddenly, "There couldn't be any mistake, I suppose, about that paralysis. They are sure?" Her eyes searched Nurse's grave face.

"They used a long darning needle—there's no mistake, Mrs. Lambeth. But do remember that the stronger you get with care and quiet, the more likely you are to—to help your recovery."

"But you say there is no recovery—or practically none," said Chris quickly.

"I'll not say that, Mrs. Lambeth, but it's a 'long lie' on your back which can be made bearable by patience and quiet *now,* or unbearable by these early days of restlessness and movement. Will I give you a sleeping draught?"

"No, no sleeping draught. By the way, if I should be sleeping to-morrow when Colonel Lambeth comes in, will you say that I wish my writing table to be put back. Make room for it somewhere. All the lights out, please," as Nurse prepared to leave the shaded one on again. "Oh, and, Nurse, let the keys of my table—they are labeled—probably the Colonel has them, let them be put beside me to-morrow too. Yes —thank you—I have everything I want——"

Darkness again. If she could lock out every one from her room for the rest of her awful crippled life! Nurse had had the grace to shut the dividing door again—no one was there to see the wide-open eyes staring blindly into the darkness, to mark the bitter line of suffering round the curved lips that were no longer red. She wondered if Nurse had told her everything. She would get Dr. Keeling to tell her to-morrow and then, if it were true, if there were really no chance of her ever getting about again, till, at any rate she were too old to care about life, why then—there were means of finishing with things. But, well, even at forty she could have done with a little more of this mad game of life, where you laughed at your losses and your gains. She must laugh at this

loss, quite a big one. She clenched her hands tightly under the sheets—while a devil seemed to be bending over her, convulsed with satanic laughter, screaming into her ears, "Never walk again, Chris Lambeth! Never dance again, Chris Lambeth! Never ride nor hunt, never play again, Chris Lambeth! You're done for—done for—done for!" For a moment she put her hand over her eyes to shut out what seemed so diabolically real. What was she going to do, after all: *Was* she "done for" because of this accident?

There might be, if she put her will to it, still plenty of interest in life, and there would be no question of the "Compleat Husband's" attention and care—nor Catherine's, as far as that went—and the thought of the girl, slim and straight and beautiful, doing all the things that Chris loved—and would never do again—things that had never been the attraction to Catherine that they had been to her, raced through her mind. For a blinding instant Chris saw Catherine in her place—helpless, between sandbags—later on, content with her books and paintings, not the least heartbroken at the prospect of no more activities—Chris herself freed from the chaperoning she privately hated. It had always worried her, though she never had shirked it, to have to take Catherine about everywhere, but it had been her intention to marry her off as soon as possible. She shook the thought from her. And now? John would be quite content to turn into an old stay-at-home chimney-corner sort of husband, never going out anywhere, a man she would hate to have about. She would much prefer that he fell in love with some one at a distance, it would make him infinitely more

interesting and keep him young. Catherine—well, she'd have to wait and see. There was something baffling about the girl. She fascinated, thrilled Chris now and then with what was of her father in her, and then again it was her father in her that froze and repelled her. God, if she had been killed outright, but to come back to life with an active mind and all her old keenness for living it as she lived it—and to find her body, the soft, white, sentient thing that she had trained to answer so well to all her desires, that she had loved more than anything else in the world, to find this body as good as dead, henceforth useless. God! But what use uttering such a name? She belonged to the intelligentsia who had declared God obsolete, and again she seemed to hear satanic laughter—done for, done for, done for! She knew it was not pain she shirked, that could be borne. She had nerves of cast iron. But this humiliating helplessness, the being lifted about, pushed in a spinal chair or something of the sort, with all the fuss that she foresaw from John! He would be "poor John Lambeth" henceforth—Catherine "that poor child"—herself—Chris clenched her hands savagely, herself "that unfortunate woman"—oh, hell, never! Life was really going to be not worth while if this were a life sentence! Nurse came quietly into the room presently, but hearing no sound crept out again, this time leaving the door ajar.

Chris stared at the little shaft of light. There were going to be endless nights and days of staring into darkness, of getting glimpses of other people's light. She saw herself hating John—Catherine—

hating anyone who came near her with sound body. For a feverish, insane instant she felt that John must be encouraged, forced, to grow old—he would have done so long ago if she had let him. Well, the sooner the better now! And Catherine—she always had it in her to bury herself. Let her then! She would soon lose her charm! Even the nurse would be preferable if they were deformed or—Chris suddenly covered her eyes. Was she going mad? What frightful thoughts, but she was certain they would return and grow more bitter still as the days went on, while she lay there listening to the echoes of other people's lives.

How she had hated, revolted at the sight, the thought of physical suffering! The lethal chamber was the only place for all who were not whole and sound. It was John who sent, in her name, large subscriptions to hospitals. She had never entered one in her life, feeling she had more sympathy with the occupants of Wormwood Scrubs and Princetown than with those of hospitals. A little memory came back to her—two! It was just after her first marriage, and they were in Venice—Gaston had unexpectedly met some old friends, a man and his wife who had been wonderfully good to him in his impoverished days. The wife was a cripple—on crutches—and Chris had made a thousand excuses for not seeing them, finally making plans for their own sudden flight from Venice. How absurdly unhappy Gaston had been. And then—ah well, no need to think of all those wretched people falling down with sickness at Caussac—or of Gaston's white fury as he had flung at her his last words, "Here I

stay! There is more than your cowardice to wipe out —there is my own."

That had angered her. She was no coward. She said it over and over again. No coward. She could bear pain quite stoically, but she hated, despised, loathed physical infirmity or suffering. A whole sound body—she adored it. It was the best thing in the world, the clean, soft, strong body, that lent itself to all the delightful orderings of a clever brain. It was not with ordinary vanity that she had cared for hers. All her life, it had been her only religion, and the only thing she respected in others—the only thing one lived for indeed. For her, personally, sensuality did not exist. It left her cold; but for others, Pat Carmichael for instance and all the other women and men of her set, if that appealed to them, *tant mieux* for them—you could do what you liked—in reason—with your own body, but to have it put outside the pale by disease or accident was to be in outer darkness, it was the abomination of desolation. It was the end—the end! Again Gaston's words rang in her ears—your cowardice! She who had dared what she had to marry him and to bring his talents to a saner use! Cowardice! She had been the man at the wheel, during all those early literary, political, religious squalls. Her caustic bitter brain had had a good deal to do with that book which brought such vigorous, decisive condemnation. She had braved a good deal to set him free from decadent tradition, and it was thanks to her that he had added luster to his name in the clearer atmosphere of free thought. But the taunt had stung, as she had motored swiftly away from that

fever-stricken place in the Pyrenees, *not,* as she had repeated to herself over and over again, because she was afraid, but because she hated the sound and sight of sickness and suffering. Just as she would instantly leave any ugly sight or turn her back on an ugly picture.

That was not cowardice! Last year she had been angry because the housekeeper had engaged a second housemaid who limped—quite slightly. She had had her sent away. It was not necessary to explain to anyone her intense repugnance for physical shortcomings—only—she banished such sights where she could, and where she could not, she banished herself. And now? Half her body dead—her spine injured—her back a wound— No more astride her horses, galloping across country here with the scent of the sea in the crisp air—no more dancing till dawn. Only this new feeling of shame, humiliation, that she had joined that loathsome company of maimed and suffering from whom she had so shudderingly withdrawn her skirts. For a wild moment she had wished that she might never look on the face of anyone now who was *not* suffering or deformed or crippled—she would shrink from them as she had before shrunk from their opposite.

On the other hand—Chris turned her head on the flat pillow and stared at the darkness. Nurse had put the light out and she heard her pushing her chair up to the fire in little short, quiet movements— On the other hand—would it be worth while to—to still hold her own? To still rule, and sway, to amuse and be amused, even to entertain? It would be—great—if

she could still be something of a personality. Had she the courage? Could she laugh at fate when fate laughed at her dead limbs? Could she view life gayly from an everlasting horizontal point of view? This was where sickly minds got sentimentally vaporish over religion. Well—she would show them that she could still map—yes and color too, her plans for the future. No grays and drabs for her! The burden of her disabilities should be her own. Once her mind was clear and she was in a fit state to take up life again, she would force people to forget that she was handicapped with a body like a log. "A-a-ah!" The little sharp cry broke from her as she tried to move—and before she could clench her hands in fury at her own weakness Nurse was leaning over her.

As she lay again in the darkness later, lending herself to the influence of the injection Nurse had given her, she felt it was one thing to make her plans for the future, but there was going to be a hard fight before she got to the coloring stage. She had got to practice habits unknown to her: to get used to stabs of pain first of all—to try and be amusing instead of amused. She would begin on Nurse to-morrow—to-night she could *not*. Later she would make John laugh —no great effort that—only she would be furious if he continued to wear that solemn hangdog expression and let his hair grow. Catherine—oh, Catherine could wait, she always had waited—yes—to-morrow—she would—begin—And if it were all too ghastly and couldn't be done—there was always a way out. That was it, a way out—quite painless——

CHAPTER XX

It was Chris who made it possible for Catherine to tell her about the little ceremony in Market Boston Church, and it was John who precipitated matters—but as Catherine remarked later, when he was accusing himself of clumsiness, it was something that had to be gone through with, like vaccination and measles, and she was glad her mother knew.

"I wish you'd both go off to town for a week and leave me to adjust myself to things," Chris had said one day and added, smiling at Catherine, "I want lots of shopping done."

It was then John had said in his heaviest manner:

"I shouldn't dream of leaving you, but, by Jove, Catherine, it would be good for you. You've been looking seedy since you've taken up with—with——"

Something in the girl's face, or perhaps Chris's sharpened look pulled him up and he broke off awkwardly. There was just a moment's silence and Catherine with a little flush laid her hand on her mother's. Chris let it rest there, but made no movement to hold it.

"I've only been waiting for you to be well enough, Mother—to tell you something. I found that I had been a Catholic all my life—so I am—I became a real member of the Church the other day."

It was the feeling of that slim cold hand underneath her own warm one, that made her words sound thin, hesitating. It seemed almost as if its touch were conveying a paralysis from the stricken woman to the girl herself. She wanted to take her own hand away, and she seemed powerless to move a finger.

"And may I ask how it was you, I think you said, 'found' you were a Catholic? These sensational conversions are sometimes interesting. As your mother, it is curious I did not know you had been one 'all your life.' "

The words fell, in cold staccato notes, like little sharp arrows, and even Colonel Lambeth, leaning against the foot of the bed, cigarette in hand, felt himself unable to lift it to his lips. He hated that look in Chris's eyes too. Dangerous!

"My name is in the register, as being baptized in Caussac Church some time before Father died."

It had to be said, but it meant so much, Catherine had not the courage to look at her mother's face as she spoke. Instead, she kept her eyes on her own hand that lay on Chris's, wishing she could withdraw it, but feeling physically incapable. Her mother's hand seemed to hold it there, though in fact it was not held at all—Chris's lay, palm downward, on the covers.

"Your name in the register? At Caussac? And where did you get this item of news from?"

"The day of your accident, I found Monsieur Toulon here. He told me."

"He came here—to tell you that?" Chris's voice

was suddenly a little hoarse, but she spoke slowly—and very coldly.

"No, Mother. He came to see you for another purpose. It was quite accidentally I heard that. He thought I was naturally a Catholic."

Toulon! Always Toulon! He had always been the one she had to fight. Could it be possible Gaston had outwitted her!

"And why should he think you a Catholic? You are not one—your own father promised me you should not be one. Don't make any mistake. I don't suppose Monsieur Toulon is willfully lying, but if he told you that pretty fable about your name in the register, it is only because for some reason he wants you to believe what is not true."

"Mother—I wrote to the curé—I have a copy of the entry, and his reply to my letter to confirm it. Father carried me there the day after you left—there is no mistake. So, darling, please don't mind. I won't be a nuisance to you!" This time Catherine tried to avoid the tragic air that seemed gathering. She leaned forward with a little smile, and John, who had said nothing, appeared to think the worst was over. He lit his cigarette successfully, and chimed in:

"It's all right, Chris darling—don't you worry. I was there—I stood by as you couldn't, and we needn't think any more about it, need we?" His words fell flat—Chris took no notice of them.

Catherine wished she could withdraw her hand from her mother's—it seemed to sting her with some electric feeling, as if it were trying to sap her courage

or perhaps put some nameless fear into her—there had always been that little fear of something in her mother ever since she could remember. In a minute she would move it, it was really silly keeping it there all the time. Her mother hated sentiment—but why didn't she move her own?

Chris was trying to remember. So Toulon had entered the lists again. He was mixing himself up in her affairs and had dared to arm her daughter with the very weapon she had fought and overcome in Gaston. And her mind, suddenly sharpened, went back to the letter from Lady Grant, telling her that he wanted to come and see her. Not to tell her this *"canard"* surely, for *canard* it must be. She had so completely succeeded in making Gaston burn his boats that she had been certain he was only occupied in procuring doctors and medicines and nurses for that horrible village epidemic. She had never believed it possible he could bring himself to even conform outwardly—for of course he had cut himself off and had absolutely denied any belief in the sacrament or ceremony of baptism. She had made the great mistake of leaving him. Left alone he became weak. With her he became a clever, zealous *"serviteur utile de la Verité"* as his new masters had called him.

Suddenly she felt Catherine's hand being withdrawn, and her dark somber eyes turned to the girl's face.

"You would have done better, Catherine, to have waited till I could attend to the matter. Whether that Frenchman has made a mistake or not—and I am cer-

tain he has—is not the point. Your father and I absolutely forbid your practicing your new religion till you are of age."

Catherine stared dully at her hand. It was again lying on her mother's white thin one. She had a curious sick feeling that if she could really take it off, not touch her mother, she would be free. She lifted her eyes slowly and met Chris's strange cold stare.

"But, Mother, my father does not forbid me. My father carried me in his arms and held me, so he meant me to be one—like he was. He was reconciled—he made his confession—he did everything, *everything* he could to atone for his—his defection—" She could think of no other word just then—and Chris looked more gray than white—so she hurried to add—gently, with a little pleading caress in her voice, "Darling, don't let us go on talking now—I am sorry it has been such bad news for you."

Colonel Lambeth came back from the window where he had stood looking out, wishing as he had wished twenty years ago, that Gaston de Gardeville had never been born. He didn't seem to stay dead either!

"Now you know, my pet—" he began in a heavily cheerful way—but again Chris never turned her eyes away from Catherine.

"What was it Toulon wanted to see me about? You said he came the day of the Yarford House meet." She was not going to call it the day of her accident. That was not on her little local calender—the meet was.

"It was to ask you for a manuscript which he thought

you had. It was the last—and of course the most important chapter of a book Father sent to him to give his opinion on. The last chapter was to follow but never came—and Monsieur Toulon is very anxious it should be published, but of course it couldn't be without this one."

"I assure you it is not in the least likely I am going to assist Monsieur Toulon. If the chapter was not sent, it was probably never written, and if, as I do not believe, it was a book according to Toulon's views, do you really think I should let it get into his possession? *Pas si bête,* my child. Now, run away, and remember you are no more a Catholic than I am!"

Was she still being held by that unholding hand, those eyes that looked at her so mockingly and yet with a hardness that hurt?

Suddenly Catherine felt she must move, or tamely acquiesce in whatever Chris ordered, and the withdrawal of her hand slowly and gently seemed to need a physical effort. She noticed too a little flicker in her mother's eyes as if surprised, but, standing free at last, Catherine felt the air clearer.

"Mother—first of all, I *am* a Catholic—nothing can alter that—" She hurried on, seeing the look on Chris's face and her hand slowly turned, palm upward, with the slim fingers seeming to ask for the girl's touch. Catherine stared at it, fascinated, for a moment, then resolutely moving a little further from the bed, she went on quickly:

"And the chapter *was* written. I have found it—it was in a drawer of the tallboy in my room."

"By Jove," was John Lambeth's contribution, and sitting down on the chair Catherine had left, he possessed himself of his wife's hand, and began stroking it, till it was quietly withdrawn under the covers.

"You will please bring me those papers, Catherine —you can go and fetch them now."

Chris's voice was quite calm. It was astonishing how unresponsive her body was to her furious anger. Naturally one doesn't scream—unless you happen to be a coal-heaver's wife—if all your work is upset and spoiled by fools and meddlers, but if she had been whole and sound—if!

"I can't, Mother. I posted them to Monsieur Toulon yesterday." And she could not move! If she had been free, she would have found some way to put the fear of God into her. The fear of God! Hyperbole! But to have one's body lying there *dead* whilst her brain was demanding some instant strong action! Some fierce movement!

She managed at last to say, quite steadily:

"That was my personal property. If Monsieur Toulon does not return it at once the matter will be put into legal hands. Until you bring it to me, you need not show yourself here again, Catherine."

"By Jove, you know, my girl, that was a bit stiff. How should you know how to deal with your mother's papers—eh what?" John felt he had to say something, and then he caught Catherine's eyes and suddenly remembered she had used that argument herself when he had proposed her "going through" the said "papers." He brushed up his short mustache in a way

he had when he ran short of words, and crossed his legs.

"They were my father's papers. They are reëditing some of his works in France, and he—Monsieur Toulon—thought this last one would be of great value just now. It was the last thing Father had asked him to do——"

"You can go, Catherine—" said Chris, shortly. "When you put those papers into my hands I will forgive you. Until then—" a little wave of the hand dismissed her, but Catherine turned to speak again.

"Mother darling—oh, it is so difficult to say it with dear kind Daddy here, but he'll understand. Couldn't you just let this book be published? It means so much —to put him right."

"So—it means all that, does it? To put him right with whom—with the Church who wanted to clip the wings of an eagle and turn him into a chained parrakeet?" laughed Chris mockingly—she took no notice of anything else Catherine had said, and John recrossed his legs, carefully pulling up his trousers at the knee.

"When a man is worn out and ill with fever, it's not the time to make a change of religion—" he said magisterially.

"He made no change of religion. He returned to the one he was born in and had practiced till the last two or three years of his life. He was in the same perfect state of health Mother saw him in last. He was only ill a short time before he died. The woman who nursed him can vouch for that." Catherine spoke

as quietly and calmly as her mother had done; and Chris raised her eyebrows slightly.

"You seem to have been making good use of your time lately. I think I must ask you now to go—you understand my wishes."

The words sounded like a declaration of war, or at least an ultimatum. The door closed behind Catherine, and John looked a little anxiously at his wife. Her face looked very white but her eyes were full of fire as they gazed at him. "You all seem to have taken leave of your senses since I have been upstairs. Tell me the details now about Catherine and this absurd story."

John Lambeth obediently told her all he knew, his surprise at the girl's request and her wish to be known henceforth by her own father's name. Chris listened quietly, making no remark, and he launched into a description of the little ceremony he had witnessed in the church—the Lanescourts' presence and their good wishes.

She pursed her lips together at the mention of the Lanescourts.

"I shall be glad if you don't discuss this subject any further with Catherine, except to see that that letter goes at once to Toulon. I must have those papers back—intact. Now please go, John——"

She dismissed him with a little cold smile, and, to avoid any embrace, gave him her hand which he kissed fervently.

He turned at the door to speak to her again but even obtuse John could see that her thoughts were far away

from him—he knew as well as if she had told him, they were back eighteen, twenty years ago with that French husband of hers who was never really dead! He cropped up in all sorts of ways and John could never be quite sure if she loved or hated him most. Anyway, hang it, he supposed till Catherine married and left her mother, there would always be some reminder of days that seemed to disturb Chris strangely, considering all things.

So Gaston had broken his word! Chris knew, as she lay there reviewing the past, that she had been too certain of her power over him, too certain of his complete surrender. The moment she had left him, he had succumbed again to that—that awful, that grasping Church, that power that followed and held you from your first breath to your last, and even after death! Who—*what* had got hold of him? Was it simply in anger at her flight? He had hated her to do that, but she had been so sure he would follow her—they had never been parted yet. She had not thought it possible he would elect to stay, if she elected to go. But he had! And how was it possible he could so suddenly have dropped all the wisdom that his later years, with her, had taught him, for the childish legends which had satisfied his youth? She had never realized that there was a Gaston who had more completely escaped her than the husband who had died in her absence. And the blow of that discovery was a greater one than that of his death had been. He had gone over to the enemy. In Chris's mind the Church, and Toulon, stood for the enemy. It had been a tug

of war. But long ago she had supposed it finished, and herself victorious. The first jolt had been to find that Catherine had formed herself on Toulon's books, knowing nothing of his early friendship with her father. That had been chiefly the reason of her opening up Old Park. Toulon was going to lecture in London and after that meeting at Lady Grant's and Catherine's expressed admiration for him, she preferred to remove all possibility of the girl coming across him.

What else did Toulon guess—or know? How much had he discovered? How much had he confided to Catherine? Still, it was not likely he would know any details of their marriage, which had been kept private because it was immediately after her father's death and only six months after her mother's. She had been deplorably weak, giving in to Gaston's pleading, promising all sorts of things she had no intention of carrying out once her object was gained, but—Chris shut her eyes. The sweet memory of Gaston's pleading came back to her. What a brief delirious dream those short years had been. It had been worth her own—weakness—well yes, nothing worse than that, she *had* been weak—but there had been times she did not wish ever to live through again, times which she had got a glimpse of in their rather startling nakedness when Gaston had said: "There is your cowardice to wipe out, and my own."

Rubbish! He had had a sensitive, imaginative, very French nature—how he could have been such a friend and admirer of Toulon, she could not understand. Chris

lay absorbed in her thoughts, her eyes fixed on the distant hills she could see from her bed, planning, mapping, rearranging a future which must be dominated again by herself, in which Toulon and his machinations would be definitely banished. It would be easy to break Catherine—to turn her from this new ridiculous freak, but no time must be lost. Later they would go somewhere for the winter. She wondered what woman sufficiently young enough to be a companion for Catherine would consent, for a consideration, to be her constant attendant, so that the girl would have no opportunity, and at last no inclination for her religious vagaries. Of course Barbara Maynard would jump at the prospect of such a visit, but she would be useless as an influence, and shocked both at the idea of being offered a "consideration." Rather fun to have sent back that stuffy old Maynard's girl with new modern ideas in her out-of-date chignoned head! No! Then—why, yes, there was Pat Carmichael's pretty niece, always hard up with her unlucky bridge craze, modern to her finger tips, bragging of her debts and not given to silence over her love affairs. She must think it out and in the meantime, when those boxes of silks and chiffons came down from London, and the room had been changed—in short when the scenery was all arranged for the new setting, she would step—no, damn—she would be *rolled* into it and open her court, have her salon again, and it should be gayer than ever!

There was just time to touch the bell close at hand before she fainted.

"When she gets it, she will destroy it," Catherine

said sadly, an hour later as she sat in Father Melford's little sitting room.

"There is always the Caussac register as proof of his good faith, and the diocesan archives, if not the parish ones. This Monsieur Toulon will certainly have read the manuscript before he returns it. You can leave things safely in his hands, I am sure. Patience, child—God doesn't need you to steady His Ark——"

And just as she was getting into her little car again, the priest said almost over his shoulder as he turned to go into his gate again, "Ralph Lanescourt is in Rome."

"Is he—is it—all right, Father?" she asked in a voice that hesitated a little.

"No one knows yet. You must pray—I'm sure you do."

He looked at her this time, from the gate and she smiled back as he made a little gesture of farewell.

CHAPTER XXI

It had been an amazing summer that followed. During the spring Chris from her bedroom had directed her little world. Never had John Lambeth been so amazed at her energy—never had there been so much telephoning, so many visits from her dressmakers, furnishers of all sorts, architects, even an actor manager, and builders. By the time June was in—and a most unusually glorious June—the little garden theater was ready for the first of a series of plays banned by the censor in town, and Chris had been present in a marvelous spinal chair, looking perfectly radiant and seductive in the most gorgeous Spanish shawls which completely hid all signs of her disabilities. There had been a special train from town —the gardens and the park were at their best, the fountains played in the brilliant sunshine.

The orangery, a very immense old Queen Anne erection, had been turned into a swimming bath, and the beauty of its old pillars, the wealth of its orange trees, made an exquisite setting for the broad bath which had been connected with the small lake beyond. The end of the orangery had been taken down—which, of course, in time would be fatal to the oranges—and a clean canal, bordered by terraces of flowers, flowed from lake to orangery, and from orangery to lake.

So many people were staying at Old Park, that among the hundreds who were there, one more or less dripping, glistening form did not matter, racing up the outside stone gradient which had been specially built for Chris's chair to go up and down to her rooms. She had refused to be on the ground floor—she had objected to being carried oftener than was absolutely necessary, so she and a harassed young architect had evolved the gradient which was to lead gently down from the end of her wing, where it would not spoil the architectural beauty of the old mansion.

All the long summer, Old Park had had its week-ends which were to become famous before the end of the summer. There had been such entertainment given them, such food and drink, such cocktails—such moonlight bathing and such daylight dancing, that people she hardly knew had struggled for invitations. That it had cost her vastly in money was no matter to Chris, but what it had cost her in a certain form of magnificent courage, perhaps no one but herself, and her private nurses knew. They had been subsidized, and if they ever appeared before guests—which they did on the very rarest occasions—no one knew them for other than her "secretaries." They had been "passed" by the doctor, but they had been found in the first instance by Mrs. Carmichael. Skilled women, strong and able, but as Pat Carmichael pointed out triumphantly to Chris, each with a certain black mark against her, known to very few but making it easier for Chris to—well, to have her own way about things. Possibly it was due to this that on the days she wanted

specially to be a hilarious success, she was in fact very brilliant and gay, quite unlike one's idea of a crippled paralyzed woman most of them had come to see out of curiosity. This beautifully clothed, sparkling creature, on her cerise cushions—who could have believed it! No one saw her, save the "secretaries," later on in her own room, exhausted and depressed, fighting against the increasing reaction that followed the drug which helped her through. She had never failed to appear when her guests were there—and wherever her gayly covered spinal chair stood, it was the center of attraction, where laughter was noisiest even if the wit that occasioned it might be of questionable taste. Chris went to her own rooms for meals, but she was always back again in the drawing-room, in some more radiant gown than ever, with some airy cobweb, or some magnificent covering that added to the attraction of her strangely brilliant eyes that seemed to blaze amused defiance at her friends. Mayfair talked more of her now than it had ever done—this clever, daring woman who refused to give up life because she had been crippled. Her toilets, her glorious Indian and Spanish shawls, her uncut barbaric rubies, her cocktails—the banned plays—the two Malay servants in their picturesque sarongs who manipulated her chair up and down the gradient. Everything intrigued London. Harley Street doctors even suggested to depressed patients that a good deal could be made of life even from one's bed, and more than one lady who had found herself hors de combat had achieved a certain satisfaction in attempting it à la Lambeth—at

any rate as far as the picturesque chiffons were concerned, if the wit and the courage were more hard to come by.

No one saw much of Chris between the beginning and the end of those weeks. John and Catherine were not encouraged to come often to her rooms and John had fallen into the habit of pottering about the house, wandering aimlessly about the gallery till Chris should need him—which she very rarely did. She hated to know he was waiting. She called the gallery outside her doors *la salle des pas perdus,* but though she teased him, she was not going to let him see how she paid for those week-ends, nor how she carried them through. Catherine had not been interfered with. By the time Chris was prepared to hear domestic items of news in the mornings, Catherine's little car had long since been back from Market Boston, and the girl's early morning doings were not referred to. She had been really an admirable young hostess—when necessary—though Chris told her bluntly that she wanted more "abandon." Still, she had privately congratulated herself on her schemes for curing Catherine of morbid tendencies, as she called it, until one day the girl had added a word to John's suggestion that the plays given in the little theater should be less lurid.

"They make me want to creep under my chair, Mother."

"If there is one thing I dislike," remarked Chris icily, "it is to find you so vulgarly squeamish. One would imagine, Catherine, you were some little curate's wife or daughter in the suburbs, instead of a girl of these modern times."

"Well, I'd infinitely prefer the curate and all his belongings to some of these modern women who come here and who don't know when they've had enough cocktails, and never remember the number of their room, sober or—otherwise." Catherine spoke a little hotly, remembering things she would rather have forgotten.

A day or two after, she was told that a house had been taken at Pau for the winter, and as if to punish her for her temerity, Pat Carmichael's niece, Peggy Harlington, was invited to bring out her hunter and spend the whole season with them, to "keep Catherine company," Peggy being the chief delinquent of the said cocktail parties. It was too good an offer for her to dream of declining. She had bridge debts, dressmakers' bills—in fact there was nowhere and no one to whom she did not owe money, so that when Chris suggested a generous "consideration" for her companionship of Catherine, and another one if she could really break the girl of her "absurd fancies," Peggy laughed cheerfully and cried:

"Done! I'll do my best. As a matter of fact she *can* freeze me to the marrow sometimes, but I'll go through with it."

"She's a bit impregnable, what?" she said later, surprised that her tentative efforts during some of her brief week-end visits to Old Park had met only with Catherine's gay reserve, a certain gracious manner that she was obliged to give her mother's guests, but that admitted nothing more.

A week before they were to go to Pau, Peggy flung herself into a chair by Chris's couch.

"Nothing doing, Mrs. Lambeth! Not a bit of use my coming out—there's something in Catherine I'll never get through, or under, or over—I don't know which it is. We simply don't inhabit the same worlds. I couldn't in fairness carry on."

Chris had laughed at her scruples. Some one had got to be on the spot, at least, to prevent Catherine from frequenting church and convents, from receiving certain visits or at any rate receiving them alone. Pau was full of convents, and Chris wanted to prevent her from forming any friendships that she herself knew nothing about. So, early in December, there was a great exodus.

The Villa de la Fontaine had been secured, a house that had quite the most beautiful position in Pau, standing in wooded grounds that hid it from the quiet road, and facing the glorious valley of the Gave and the forests beyond, with the whole line of snow-clad Pyrenees on which to feast one's eyes.

Catherine leaned out of her window that first evening, the light almost gone, a wonderful feeling of happiness in her heart. It was almost a home-coming for her. She was in France, her father's country! Somewhere over there, down below those peaks just disappearing in the gathering darkness, he was lying, waiting for her to go and kneel beside his grave and tell him things. It was one of the first things she meant to do. Though she had noticed that when Peggy had said once, "Pity the roads aren't good in winter for that ripping drive from Pau to Caussac and back by Argélès," Chris had said carelessly:

"Oh, impossible in the winter, and the cars are all too big for that road."

Catherine thought of her little car she had brought out. It would suit the road perfectly—a road, with sheer precipice on one side, on which two cars could only just pass. She would bide her time, but she would make no mystery of her visit—at least not to her mother, and she would be quite firm about going alone. Peggy was very insinuating but stared helplessly at Chris next day when she said:

"Do you know that Catherine went out this morning to a convent chapel quite near here?"

"Yes, Mother—every morning, unless you lock me up in a room—and then I shall probably climb out of the window," laughed Catherine later when her mother peremptorily asked her if she intended to continue "these absurd practices."

It seemed to be the only hour of the day she was quite sure to be free from Peggy's constant companionship. Nothing short of an earthquake would have induced her to get out of bed so early, which rather annoyed Chris who felt that for a fellow conspirator, Peggy ought to have shown more zeal. For Catherine they were her happiest hours; without that little visit to the lovely chapel of the Reparatrice convent in the early mornings she could not have endured quite so cheerfully the increasing drag of Peggy's watchfulness. She had very soon divined the whole affair, though she had not imagined it was on a business understanding.

Occasionally and whenever she could manage to be

absent, Peggy seconded Chris at a milder form of entertaining than had been in vogue at Old Park. Chris knew that after that strenuous summer, she must take life more easily. There were bridge parties—later on her famous Sunday dinner parties, and once those were instituted no one saw much of her during the week. Peggy had found plenty of French admirers and partners—she seemed to have no unoccupied hour, and Catherine smiled at her own sudden interest in golf, which made her in self-defense accompany Colonel Lambeth daily over the river to the "game of Kings!" There had been a long silence, really an inexplicable silence on Toulon's side. What was he going to do—she had written twice, the last time begging him to take things into his own hands and add his own last chapter, written from the impression that de Gardeville's "chapter of Salvation" had made on him, for of course he had read it. But no word had come from him, yet she knew he was in Paris. He had given the *"Réponse"* at the reception of a new member of the *Académie Française* quite recently; his witty speech was commented on and reproduced in all the reviews and papers, yet there was no word of de Gardeville. There could be no mistake about his knowing the Pau address. It was curious. Then she found that something else was curious too.

A girl had promised to let her know by the first post in the morning, about an engagement for that same afternoon, and apparently there was no post.

"They are not down yet, Mademoiselle," said the elderly French butler who had been taken on with the majority of the servants.

"Not down? Where are they?" asked Catherine.

"Madame has all the correspondence taken to her room and sends it down later, Mademoiselle."

So that was it—still—Catherine drank her coffee and managed not to wrinkle her forehead till the servants were out of the room, but a horrible suspicious thought came to her mind. When she went to her own room later, the note she had expected lay on her table but nothing else.

She knocked at her mother's door, and one of the women opened it and came quickly outside, closing it again behind her.

"May I see Mother?" she asked and the woman shook her head.

"She doesn't seem well this morning—just a headache—it will pass off—but I shouldn't go in, Miss Lambeth," she said a little truculently. Catherine turned away. What was she to do—she must find out if Toulon had written—but if all his letters to her were going to be suppressed, how was she to know anything.

"Catherine—are you going out—do wait for me, I hate going out alone—" shouted Peggy over the gallery a few minutes later as Catherine went downstairs prepared to go out.

"Oh, sorry, but I really can't this morning," she smiled back, observing that Peggy had only just come from the bathroom, and would certainly take ages to dress.

Once out of the house Catherine almost ran to the garage, and luckily found her little car pushed out into the yard. Peggy was quite equal to following

her, but she would have to be quick to get on her track. In a minute the little car was out on the road, spinning down it, slowing round the corner by the Reparatrice Convent, threading through gardens and by the great casino, until she reached the post office. It might be foolish, rash, she really did not mind—but when, lunching later with her friend who had written to her that morning, she got the reply from Toulon, a fierce indignation and a great joy came to her. "Written you twice. Received two wires from you begging me to delay publication. Regrettable."

So that was what was happening. Her correspondence examined and detained, and even messages sent in her name, and it was only after a minute or two's hard battling that she managed, as she called it, to let her heart smile as she made a little interior act of faith. There was something she hated that she was going to do. Write to Monsieur Toulon, beg him to, at least, let it be known that Gaston de Gardeville had retracted his heresies, and been reconciled to the Church before his death. As to the book, Toulon knew the French rights of publication better than she did. She knew her father had left no will, and no property, literary or otherwise. All the manuscripts of his earlier writings had been destroyed—and she hoped, whatever the laws, Toulon would consider that last manuscript of her father's as a gift and not a loan.

That night, feeling happier and stronger, she knocked at Chris's door and was admitted. Chris lay on a couch, smoking, while Peggy mixed herself a cocktail, watching, with an amused eye as she sipped

it, the greeting of mother and daughter. Catherine bent to kiss her mother and Chris deftly waved the girl on one side with the hand that held the cigarette.

"Where have you been all day?" she asked a little sharply.

"Golfing, Mother—and you remember I was to lunch with the Greshams—don't you?"

She wanted badly to speak to her mother without Peggy in the room, but the girl gave no sign of moving till suddenly Chris said a little abruptly:

"Well, good night, both of you—I am tired to-night."

They left the room together, but the moment Peggy's door shut on her, Catherine came back and knocked again softly.

"What is it? When I send you away, you really must not come back again!" Chris was still smoking—she had not rung for the nurses, and Catherine stood at the little table covered with glasses and bottles of liqueurs, cigarettes, and flowers.

"Mother, I think some correspondence of mine has gone astray. Will you give orders that I may have it without any further—accident?"

She said it very gently, playing as she spoke with the fringe of the silk wrap that was flung over her mother. Chris's eyes flickered a little, as she stretched her hand for another cigarette, and a hard smile wreathed her lips.

"There are no accidents with anyone's correspondence here. The letters pass through my hands," she said dryly.

"And telegrams, Mother. Two have been sent in my name." She spoke in a low voice, watching Chris strike a match with nonchalance.

"Very likely. I wish you to have no dealings of any kind with Monsieur Toulon. Beyond my forbidding you to write, I can do no more. No doubt as a Catholic—I believe you consider yourself one—as a Catholic, you have your own views of honor and filial obedience, but I shall continue to do all I can to prevent anything reaching you—from him."

There was a moment's silence, and then Catherine spoke again:

"I have written to him to-day, Mother, and as I want to get his reply I have given him an address to write to where it will be safe. I am sorry—it's not a pleasant thing for me to have to do, but—I have told you at once."

This time Chris's eyes blazed with anger.

"What address—the Greshams? I will put a stop to that and write at once to Toulon."

"No, Mother, not the Greshams—I can't tell you. It is only, as you know, correspondence about Father's reconciliation with the Church, and the publication of his book. When that is arranged, there will be no more—he is much too important a person to waste his time writing to me for anything unnecessary. Mother, couldn't you let me have that last manuscript?"

Her voice sank, pleading, and she bent over her mother, meaning to kiss the little white hand that lay on the coverlet. But with a quick fierce movement, Chris struck Catherine on her cheek.

"That is my answer—now go!"

CHAPTER XXII

It was not till early in January that Catherine found herself free to make an excursion to Caussac alone. Peggy and she had arranged to go over to call on some people in Argélès, but at the last moment, just when the small car had been brought round to the door, one of Peggy's French admirers had ridden up, and persuaded her that a ride with him in the opposite direction would be infinitely more entertaining—and meritorious, than lunch with elderly compatriots in a hotel.

Catherine, coming downstairs, was hailed by Peggy over the gallery. She was half-dressed, in riding kit, and putting both hands to her mouth she exclaimed in a dramatic stage whisper:

"I'm not coming—but you go. And don't give me away."

She vanished, and Catherine, only too glad to be alone, drove off quickly down the long straight road. It was a golden opportunity. She would go to Caussac and leave the friends in Argélès for another day. They had said "any day"—so they were not expecting her or Peggy this morning more than any other. Perhaps though, as her mother had known they were going to see the Derings, she had better just call. She could hardly make up her mind yet. There was no reason why she should make a secret of going to visit her

father's grave when she was so near, only, somehow, since that awful night when her mother had struck her in sudden fury, she had never approached the subject of her father or Toulon, or indeed of anything likely to anger Chris. Toulon had written in answer to her, that he was coming down during the winter and would talk everything over with her. After that, silence, though she had written once since. She supposed, rightly—that Chris had written an extremely strong letter to Toulon, which had had the effect of staying his hand and reducing him to complete silence, so far as his correspondence with Catherine was concerned.

"Coming down," he had said—where to? She remembered he had once spoken of his chalet in the Pyrenees but where exactly it was she did not know. He had walked to Caussac from there, so it was somewhere not beyond reach, but how she wished she knew! Anyhow, she was not going to worry any more. Lately, in spite of the espionage that she knew had been increased, she had felt a growing freedom in her interior life that helped her to get through the annoyances, sometimes the petty indignities that Chris, seconded by Peggy, put her to. The old priest to whom she went often for counsel, told her one day:

"The more you can love Our Lord, the less will you feel His chastening. Think of the saints and their thirst for suffering. His love is like an anæsthetic—there is no pain even in His scourging, that you cannot bear if you drench yourself in it."

Catherine's heart absolutely smiled that morning as she spun her car down the long road, bordered on her right by the Gave, racing and foaming over its rocky bed. To "drench herself with God's love" was a new thought. She liked it better than those wonderful words of St. Augustine's about God being the Tamer, taming into submission those who were to be made perfect in Him. And He *had* been good to her—she had only the most petty troubles, after all, compared to what others had had to bear. How great must have been her father's—what agonies of bitter remorse! And deep down in her own mother's heart there must be a like agony, that all this outward, unreal gayety was hiding. If only, if only, the "Tamer" would stay his scourge for her mother, beaten and helpless in her body, but, Catherine knew, so active for everything against religion.

"I'll lift up my eyes toward the hills," she said to herself, as she drank in the glories of the morning sun on the wooded hills and the snowy peaks beyond. The road had been very clear, and profiting by the absence of traffic, she let out her little engines, and only slowed down as she passed through the small towns and villages. Bétharrem with its great seminaries, its lovely little chapels marking the stations of the Cross on its wooded hill, St. Pé, with its magnificent old fortified church and its old mediæval houses and terraces and market square, were of a different sort of interest from the distinctly mediæval little places like Corroaze. Catherine knew she would pass through Lourdes and she had not been quite sure

in her mind whether she intended to stop there. Lourdes was not an article of faith. She had heard a good deal of witticism on the subject, in her mother's house, and in the houses of her mother's friends—even from Catholics, and she had not been particularly displeased or worried. Only she had not felt a great wish to go there. She had been told that there was "nothing doing" during the winter—that it was the "close season" for what were called "miracles," and that when the summer pilgrimages began many pilgrims were chiefly conspicuous in Pau, where they arrived in the motor *char-à-bancs,* shopping, eating and drinking. No—she thought she would not go to Lourdes. It was a pity about certain things—certain exaggerated statements that her mother had got hold of when she wanted to say wounding things.

And then the bend of the road brought a lovely view. The hills were higher, but the peaks for the moment were hidden. The river was broader too, and beyond it there seemed to be a long wooded path, high above which stood a white gray church that had two long embracing arms curved outward and sloping downward—a church that, whatever might be said for its architectural features, looked exquisite in its soft gray shadows against the sky, facing another hill on which stood a still grayer old castle. It seemed to be saying gently to the fortress:

"Well—you represented brute force—what has come of it? You are an empty shell now. I am not built with hands. I was. I am. I shall be."

This must be Lourdes, she supposed, and seeing an

old man on the road before her, she stopped the car beside him.

"Is that Lourdes?" she asked, pointing to the town she was beginning to approach.

He pointed for answer with his stick somewhere below the church. *"C'est bien là, Mademoiselle, la grotte de la Sainte Vierge."* As Catherine thanked him and drove on, she could see the little recess under the rocks, lit by a hundred candles. People coming and going. It seemed very simple, and quiet, and unoffending. She drove very slowly, wondering, trying to recollect what she had heard, what the church claimed. That Our Lady had appeared eighteen times to a little maid, who had finished her humble and holy days in a convent, and had been raised to the altars, was not the least of the miracles that were said to have followed.

A long convent wall hid the view, and Catherine put on speed up the hill. She would like to go to the grotto, but she felt it would be more curiosity than devotion, and she was sure praying would be difficult there. Then, too, had she time? She was not quite sure how long it was going to take her, nor was she quite sure if the road between Argélès and Caussac were open. When snow or much rain had fallen, it was impassable, but they had had beautiful dry weather for some weeks now—she would find out at Argélès if it were all right, and she had her road map and knew it would be possible to get back to Pau by another route. But in that case, she had better stop at Lourdes on her way there, as she would not pass it later.

She was directed to where she could leave her car, and as it was only just ten o'clock, she felt satisfied that she had decided to look at the grotto. She supposed the great empty esplanade she crossed was where the pilgrims gathered, where they brought the sick. It was very quiet—very few people about, but as she passed a railed-in enclosure by a little three-gabled building, one of the great doors opened, to let in a few women who were waiting outside. Catherine got a glimpse of heavy white curtains—evidently the baths. What a curious idea! No, she was glad Lourdes was not an article of faith, she was sure she never wanted to see a pilgrimage there. She wondered how long the "cures" lasted. It must be pleasant to have the relief from pain and disabilities, but even Christian Science and other sects claimed much the same sort of thing. She wondered if Ralph believed in it, but she dare not think of Ralph much, those days. There was a supernatural stillness as she stood behind the ranged benches, the only sound being the breaking water of the river just behind, over its rocky bed, and the occasional dropping of wax from some of the many candles burning in the grotto itself. Catherine looked with a little disfavor on the candle-smoked grime of the roof of the grotto, the blackened crutches and sticks, thick in dust that hung from above, and for the moment she thought the old man, bent, in round skull-cap, and swathed in baize apron, who was pinching wicks, clamping half-burnt candles together, and throwing the ends of well-burnt ones on to the stand of the great sconce, might be taken for some old gnome him-

self. Then she saw his lips moving, his eyes turned to the great statue of Our Lady, and when there was nothing to be done to the candles, he knelt painfully and cautiously behind the altar in the grotto, and got out his rosary. No one could doubt his devotion. If Catherine had known he had climbed a tree near the grotto sixty years before, and had watched the little maid as she knelt in ecstasy listening to the words from her celestial visitor, she might have asked him to pray for her, but she did not know he was Jean-Marie who had tended those candles for fifty years. When Our Lady sent for her faithful servant later, she chose the little maid's earthly birthday for his celestial one.

Presently she went a little closer in. It was still only curiosity, she thought. She looked at two women kneeling at the iron screen that had its *"Entrée"* and *"Sortie"* at either end; she saw a priest, rosary in hand, pass through, kiss the rock that was polished by years of such devotional acts, and kneel for a few moments on the ground outside. He was neither young nor old, but he had a face that had the strong keen look of a man who has such a supernatural interest in life, in souls, that age with him would never be counted by years. It would seem as if the great High Priest Himself, rendering His life for love of souls, and breathing His longing for them in His words, "I thirst," had bequeathed that thirst to His priesthood, for all time, and to some in a specially supernatural degree.

Catherine almost unconsciously watched him as he seemed to be speaking to Someone close to him.

Then he got up from his knees, signed himself and turned to go, and Catherine moved up and knelt down where he had knelt. What was it? She found herself praying as she had never prayed before! Telling the *Sainte Vierge* her doubts and prejudices about Lourdes, but that never again should they trouble her. Telling her about her mother and the "espionage," about her father's falling away and her longing to reinstate him, about her sudden resolution to let Ralph, ("I love him you know, Mother of Mine") to let Ralph believe she meant to go into a religious order so that he should not be deterred from his first intentions. Then she listened to the stillness for a little, and it seemed as if the Mother of God who had once rested there, just put a corner of her mantle round her and whispered, "I will tell my Son. Have courage. He will do all I ask Him."

She was glad there were no London policemen on the road up that glorious vale of the Seven Valleys. And she had the road to herself. It was the same one, running almost parallel with the railway, that Toulon had taken the previous year: the old way the devout, in a more devotional age, had taken on their pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella: the old way the earlier Crusaders had taken, to and from Spain, when, in spring and summer, the difficult paths across the mountains were not blocked by snow. The old Templars Church at Gavarnie had heard their first and last confessions and mass in France, and indeed, for many, their last on earth.

As she slowed down through the little village of

Ayzac, she suddenly remembered her old schoolrellows Marie Delange and Thérèse d'Ayzac. She wondered if Thérèse got her name from this country, but anyhow she would say an Ave for them both as she drove by the little church, set, like the whole village, much above the high road.

At Argélès she decided to run in to see the Derings for a moment but was glad to hear that they had left for a few days and would not be back till the week following.

With a free mind, she turned the car and wound her way through the busy little market—it was a Tuesday—and up the hill behind the cemetery. It was very cold, but clear and sunny, and the great towering peaks stretched before her, with snow on their summits, but that was not to consider it real winter yet. By the time she was passing through Gérac she was wishing she had bought something to eat in Argélès. Gérac did not seem to offer much in the way of food, but she managed to buy a *"petit pain"* and some chocolate, and was told by the redoubtable grocer and mayor, though Catherine did not know it, till he told to her with some unction—that the road to Caussac was in excellent condition, though the first snow that fell would leave it impassable till spring.

"Mais non, mais non, Monsieur le Maire," said a woman in a black capulet, who was standing near, "only the continued heavy rains make it bad. My master has gone along it to-day, and he promises himself to come back by it."

"Oh, la la—but Monsieur your master would walk

it in a blinding snowstorm. He is venturesome that one!"

Catherine smiled at them and nodded as she left the little shop and got into her car. It was like a spring day—with sufficient nip in the clear air to make the climbing run an exhilarating joy. She passed four girls, peasants, all knitting, all in the black capulets, walking behind two heavily laden donkies. They flashed friendly black eyes as she slowed down to pass them, but did not break off from their singing, to which they kept step.

Par vos blanches cimes,
Vos lointains échos,
Chantez, monts sublimes,
Ces refrains—si beaux.

and then came the lilting refrain that followed Catherine for a long way:

"Laudate, laudate, laudate Mariam——"

That precipitous path round the mountains to Caussac delighted her. There lay the world miles below. She felt more than halfway to heaven—almost it seemed, level with the mountain tops, but when she had to pass a motor that was coming in the opposite direction, she would have been very glad if the English rule of the road had prevailed, and she could have hugged the rocky heights that towered on her left. Instead she edged nearer the little low wall that guarded the border, below which she dare not look till she was

well beyond the highest point, rather glad and yet regretting too, that her way home would be along lower roads, winding behind the little hills that she could see from her bedroom window at Pau. She began to recognize the country, remembering the day they had spent on that plateau where she had painted her little water color. Far below her she could see a house here and there, a bridge over a glistening stream, and she said to herself her father must certainly have known all this, have walked or driven along this very road. All the love that would have been theirs, if he had lived, seemed to be growing and throbbing in Catherine as she got nearer and nearer to Caussac. It was almost as if she had made rendezvous with him—as if she were going to meet him for the first time. Her father, the laughing, grave-eyed young man in the tennis flannels to whom she had held out her little baby arms, who had not only gathered her, motherless, into his loving ones, but had carried her to and placed her in the safest arms of all, the Church's. Oh, beloved father—and he had lain there waiting for her all these years, waiting for her prayers, for all she could do for him! She left her car at the inn that seemed, among all the shuttered hotels and pensions, to show most signs of life, and was asked if she would take lunch. There was already a good lunch being served to a Monsieur —she could have a table to herself. No—she had had lunch but she would come back for some coffee presently. The way to the church——?

It semed to Catherine, when she at last slowly got

up from her knees on the wet cold grass, where she had lost count of time while she prayed, that it was not possible she would not find her father, in the flesh, beside her.

She pushed aside the branches of bush that hung over the cross, and with her bare fingers, traced lovingly each letter of his name, stooping to kiss it. She could see that it had been all kept in order, the little mound at the foot of the cross was neatly planted with a tiny low border of ivy which had been well trained, and a little pot of asters had evidently recently been stuck in the ground at the foot. She had to find the Curé, so she must go. As she moved away at last, meaning to come back before she left Caussac, and constantly before she left Pau, the click of the gate warned her that some one was entering the little churchyard. She stuffed her handkerchief, after a swift dab at her tears, into her coat pocket, and turning, found Toulon before her.

So this was the Monsieur who had walked the path she had come to-day—he had left Gérac—Gérac too—he lived there! very early, and had been lunching when he heard Catherine's car. It seemed too good to be true! She turned with him glady, to say, with him this time, the prayers that help the living and the dead, and then he took her where she wanted to go. The Curé had seen his predecessor since Toulon's visit last year. He told Catherine every detail he could think of, of her father's complete surrender, his heroic service, and his great humility. He told her the old Curé had said:

"When I gave him back the child, after her baptism, her father's tears mingled with *le saint chrême* on her little head, blessing her doubly."

After that, Jeanne Clavé had been visited, and the girl at the first sight of the gentle old wrinkled face, had put her arms round her neck and kissed her on both cheeks.

It was there, in Jeanne's little shining kitchen, that Toulon told her how simultaneously, next month, there was to appear in all the reviews, magazines and periodicals that mattered, the story of de Gardeville's submission and his noble end; mention would be made of the book he had written, which was hoped might be published in its complete fullness—that is to say with its happy ending—during the coming year.

"And where is your niece who took care of me—can I find her there—at Larroust?" Catherine asked as she listened to the story of how she had been cared for in the little neighboring village. Jeanne shook her head.

"After your mother had sent for you, Mademoiselle, she became a poor Clare. She is one of the lay sisters at their home in Lourdes."

Catherine told Jeanne she intended to go there again as soon as possible, and presently, with a little hesitation, Jeanne said gently, after having heard how Catherine had only lately known she was Catholic and become one in happy fact:

"And Madame your mother also—she practices again?"

Toulon began to collect his impedimenta, and Catherine took Jeanne's rough hand.

"No, Jeanne—she is not Catholic—she is *incroyante* —will you pray for her?"

"Incroyante? That is possible—but she is Catholic."

Jeanne spoke in low voice, but Toulon had heard and turned.

"I told you, did I not?" he said, coming up to her, a look of trouble on his face, seeing Catherine's surprise.

"Mother a Catholic? Oh—no—it's not possible—" she breathed softly, thinking of the hard words and bitter things that her mother had been guilty of.

"She certainly became a Catholic, just before her marriage to your father. It was a few months afterwards that she let everything go."

Catherine stood gazing from Toulon to Jeanne and from Jeanne to Toulon, dazed at the news. Then that accounted for that little tan and gold *paroissien "A toi mon Gaston—Chris."* She must have had *some* faith, some religion—or had father been so much in love with her that he had been blind to her irreligion —just trusting that time, and his love—and God's grace, would work the miracle! God's grace—*that* was certain—that would never be wanting, or—did He withdraw even that after persistent rejection?

Toulon came with her as far as Larroust, but she was very silent, glad to be at the wheel, glad to just listen as he talked quietly and easily about the few distinguished men who were writing articles on de

Gardeville and his Catholicism, his apostasy, and his submission. There was no faintest suspicion in the minds of the adversaries, Toulon said, that he had died outside their own "enclosure." This month, not only was their chief publication bringing out a review on the book that had been the first to be placed on the Index, but the daily paper that was the organ of their party was giving a whole column to quotations from the book in question. Certainly, there would be some fluttering in the dovecots when the truth burst upon them next month.

They had arrived at Larroust, and Toulon told her she must see the tiny church—one of the tiniest churches in France. It seemed strange to think she had been carried there as a baby. Her eyes caught a rather pompous tablet on the wall, to the memory of an Irishman who had died, and whose virtues military and private, were recorded, in melodious Latin—otherwise the little church seemed empty, *le bon Dieu* was not there.

Then Toulon stood by as she seated herself at the wheel. He was going to walk back to Caussac. He would like to have come further on with her. He felt she was going away with a heavy feeling of sadness, discouragement, and he knew there would be no sympathy at home.

"Catherine—remember this. When you were born, a greater tragedy than this was happening. It seems unbearable for you, because you have lived your life with your mother—you are actually suffering by her attitude—but nineteen years ago worse was happening by your father's apostasy. And God didn't need us

to put things right. Gaston de Gardeville's soul was saved without his little daughter's directing God's hands, without Henri Toulon's aid at all, God forgive me. All we need worry about now is our abandonment—our perfect reliance on Him—and our prayers. So courage!"

He watched the little car till it was out of sight, and turned slowly to mount the hill again.

CHAPTER XXIII

CATHERINE was sorry she was not coming back by Lourdes. She felt as if, this time, she would have been glad to leave this new trouble at Our Lady's feet in the grotto, but after all, she said to herself, the "ice was broken" and she had presented herself as a *"cliente."* As she passed St. Martin's Church, in Pau, she ran in for a moment. It was very dark, but she turned at once to where several candles burned before the blue and white statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, and after she had laid this new matter before her and begged her powerful aid, she felt more content to face the immediate future.

She and her stepfather dined alone that night. Peggy had come in to dress, and had gone off again and would not return till the early hours of the morning. John had not seen Chris all day—she had had one of her headaches he said, and so he had had a round of golf with a friend and gone back with him to his hotel.

Catherine talked of her drive, and the country, without mentioning Caussac. She thought he looked very gray, very tired, and much thinner than he used to be. Poor Daddy, life seemed to have stopped for him when her mother had her accident, and he was a man who had no interests apart from her. If Chris

had known that he walked up and down the corridors near her rooms, or sat reading his papers in a corner where he could see her door opened now and then by her "secretaries," she would not have been touched, only extremely furious, and would certainly have forbidden him to do it again.

Catherine made him play chess with her, but halfway through, after he had let her checkmate him in the most flagrant fashion, he declared he was too stupid to play any longer. The fresh air had made him sleepy —and she was a dear good child, but he thought he would prefer it if she played to him.

As Catherine laughingly teased him, and turned over some music on the piano, he said casually:

"I met a man who'd met young Lanescourt the other day."

It was quite absurd her heart should beat like that, it made her hands unsteady. She stooped to pick up the music that had fluttered to the ground.

"Oh—which of them? There are two 'young' Lanescourts."

John was lighting a cigar. He was very deliberate.

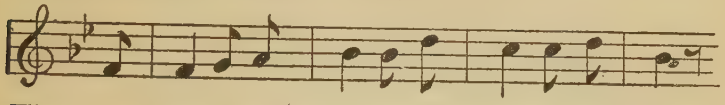
"Which? I'm sure I don't know. The young M. P., I should think. Parliament isn't sitting, and Roger's the boy for Paris."

"It was in Paris?" she asked.

"Yes—apparently he didn't want to be recognized —like plenty of other young men in Paris."

Of course it would be Roger—how foolish she was. Ralph was—well, she didn't know—he must be in one of those colleges, either in Rome or somewhere else,

where he was trying his vocation, or studying. There was no means of knowing. Barbara Maynard might have told her, but she had only received one letter from her, and there had been no special news in it, and Catherine would not ask for any. She had written once to Father Melford, but there had been no answer, or it had not reached her. Perhaps that, too, had been detained. She played mechanically, with her thoughts elsewhere, but John was not listening. He had found oblivion in one of Peggy's novels, and by and by Catherine began to try and pick out the tune those young Pyrenean girls had been singing. She remembered the refrain, it began so——



That was it—it suddenly came back to her, and she began to play the whole air, then to improvise on it, and had just sung the words as far as she could remember them when the Basque butler with the side whiskers put in his head with a politely astonished air.

"Pardon, Mademoiselle—Madame begs you to cease playing."

These English, groaned Nicholas, as he closed the door again! First the young lady plays music which he was sure must be profane, though certainly he had nothing to complain about her, she at least went to mass every day—but why make that pilgrims' hymn sound profane too with that whispering, swelling sound about the little pious air? *Mon Dieu!* and that Mademoiselle Peggee—and her expensive thirst! And

that *"vaurien"* who was always hanging about, getting mounts from the Lambeth stables, not to mention what else he got, in their dining room!

Catherine closed the piano, and presently, as, evidently, John was absorbed in his book, she said goodnight and went upstairs.

It was not till the end of the week that she was admitted into her mother's room, though she knew that Peggy had been in and out several times. Once, just as she had been told smilingly and almost apologetically by one of the nurses that "Mrs. Lambeth has just gone off to sleep," a burst of shrill laughter had come from behind the closed door, and there was no mistaking the fact that Chris was not asleep and that Peggy was there with her.

The same evening, probably having been a little touched at what the woman had repeated to her of Catherine's hot blush of—was it shame at having such a lie concocted to keep her out of her mother's room, Chris sent for her and was more than usually gracious.

"Its been a bad week, Catherine—you know that graceless Peggy amuses me about all her admirers. She simply walks in unless we lock the door. What a smart gown—is it Paris?" She rattled on while Catherine kissed her hand—she hated to be kissed on her face she said.

"No. It's one you got me before we left home. Shall you be down to-morrow—or should we put every one off?"

It was to be one of Chris's Sunday dinner parties which were beginning to be talked of, and she knew

there had been more invitations than usual. There would be bridge and dancing but thank goodness there was no place here to give those plays, in which her mother delighted.

"Put off the guests! Of course not. Nurse has found me a medicine that helps me to get through—and I believe I shall soon be able to sit up more or less—" Chris very rarely alluded to her condition before her family. If anyone spoke to her about it, they were headed off at once, and Chris would lay herself out to be so particularly frivolous and witty to the would-be sympathizer, that he, or she, generally felt the accident had been greatly misrepresented, and that the *mise-en-scène* was a pose, for effect.

"That will be splendid, Mother, but you won't do it without the doctor's consent will you, darling? Because it——"

"Oh, stop croaking, Catherine. What have you been doing all the week? Peggy says you are as slippery as an eel and she never finds you." Chris eyed the girl sharply, but smilingly, and Catherine laughed naturally and gayly.

"That is Miss Peggy's affair—not mine. She fishes in different waters from this eel."

"I didn't know eels fished," smiled Chris, wondering as she had often wondered before, how she came to have such a daughter, so serious-minded and yet with such a fascinating charm in her young beauty. And then the thought of the girl's father came to her mind and the smile vanished. She must always remember how dangerous this country *might* be for de

Gardeville's daughter, with tendencies like this—well, like his earlier ones, that is.

"By the way, did you see the Derings? How are they? Was it a hotel or a villa they're in? I hate Argélès."

Now it would have to come out, thought Catherine, and sent her mind swiftly to that little grotto where she had knelt.

"No—the Derings had gone to Biarritz for some days. I must try again—it's a lovely run."

"I thought it was a horribly flat, uninteresting road from here—until of course you get nearer the Pyrenees. What did you do—lunch by yourself? A bit dull. Peggy, I hear, went off with her *beau chevalier.*" Chris laughed and took up a copy of *Vogue.*

"I took the whole tour and came back by Laruns and Juzon," said Catherine with her eyes on the picture of a very futurist young woman in the paper before her mother.

Chris raised her head slightly and Catherine sat back again in her chair.

"Through Caussac then?"

"Yes, Mother. Being so near—I had to go. I've been longing to ever since I knew."

She thought her mother would flame out, and certainly Chris had gone very white.

"I thought this sort of thing would happen if we came here," she said back again in her usual icy manner. "Now you have been once, let that content you. And another thing, Catherine. I choose to have you known as Miss Lambeth. I hear that people are calling you

by the other. Please correct them when you hear it. Until you are of age, I wish it."

It was useless to always have an argument every time she came to her mother's room. In the matter of her name she must conform, for the present, and later, when those reviews came out, there would be so much anger and reproach, that she felt she would not annoy her mother now about visits to Caussac.

As she got up she said slowly:

"It is a name I am so proud to bear, Mother, it's a little hard I have to use one I have no manner of right to at all."

"Better tell your friends to remember it too, when they write," said Chris shortly, taking up the magazine again as Catherine turned to go.

"Why, Mother? Have there been more letters—that I haven't received?" Catherine stopped short and looked at Chris who flicked the pages over without looking at them.

"Letters that are properly addressed go up to your room," she said shortly.

"Letters, then, addressed to me in my own name—what becomes of them?" A sudden sharp pain shot through the girl. It was not of course in the least likely that Ralph would—or could, write to her, but supposing Lady Mary, or Father Melford, or Barbara had? She felt sure that Barbara would put Lambeth, but she felt equally sure that Lady Mary and the priest would address her as Miss de Gardeville.

"Who was it from, Mother?—do tell me." There was pleading in her voice that angered Chris.

"For you to make arrangements for your letters to go elsewhere? I don't know—I threw them in the fire—bills or notices I suppose. But the next that come in that name shall go back to the post office with NOT KNOWN HERE written on them. For goodness sake go, Catherine—you always manage to make me furious."

But Catherine could not go. It seemed too great an indignity to be borne, that at nineteen she should be treated in this childish manner, after such perfect freedom to do and live as she liked up till quite recently.

"You burned my letters, Mother—because they were addressed to me in my own name—Father's name?"

Her voice sounded uneven, because her heart seemed to be thumping quite close to her throat.

Chris turned suddenly in a fury.

"When are you going to stop for ever quoting your father's name? You know little enough about him or you would not be so anxious to bear his name—especially among French Catholics. He was *my* affair—not yours—and he is dead and forgotten."

"No, Mother—he is distinctly *my* affair as you call him—every bit of me is his child—Gaston de Gardeville will never die—and presently we shall see if he is forgotten——"

She had allowed herself to say too much in her anger at her mother's injustice and she turned hurriedly to the door again, to find Peggy just inside the room. An amused smile flickered on her lips as Catherine passed out and shut the door. She sauntered up to Chris's bed.

"This sort of thing's playing the very devil with your

nerves, you know." She spoke more as a contemporary of Chris's than as a girl young enough to be her daughter, but Peggy had never been a girl. She was a modern twenty, sophisticated in a way that sometimes even staggered Chris.

"It wouldn't have happened if you did what I asked you here for," snapped Chris angrily.

Peggy sat down and crossed her legs, admiring the small foot in its silver shoe, twisting it this way and that. She stifled a yawn. "I've worked like a nigger darlin'—I do draw the line at going out at seven o'clock in the morning with her—my religious principles you know—" she laughed, lazily. "But I've offered her three of my choicest 'beaux,' with a view to her education. Nothing doing. I believe one of them has been worrying about his sins ever since—and the other two are contemplating the idea of a reformed life. She's a perfect weed destroyer. I shall be writing tracts soon myself." The silver shoe fell off, and Peggy kicked it away. Chris was laughing a little.

"What did you do with that packet I gave you?" she said.

"What you told me," lied Peggy and went after her shoe, hobbling on one stockinged foot.

No, really, Chris wasn't playing the game—nor was she as a matter of fact. Girls' letters, lovers' letters —there was an unwritten law about them—and at the first opportunity she'd give that little packet of three letters back to Catherine. They were locked up in her drawer, ever since that morning Chris had hurriedly pushed them all three tied up, and unopened, into her hand saying:

"Burn these!"

"There's something I want you to do, Peggy. Write in your own name—or better go—to that book shop in the Rue Henri IV and ask them to send you every review and paper that mentions the name of de Gardeville. Say you want to watch them for all notices about his books, etc.—if they can't do it themselves they'll have some agent in Paris who will. Write the name down—go to my writing table," commanded Chris, and watched Peggy pull a piece of paper out of a pigeon hole. She picked up a pencil and licked it.

"I didn't know you'd 'litery' tendencies, darlin'," she said beginning to write. "De Gardeville—much nicer name than Lambeth, which suggests the Vauxhall Road—and Archbishops."

"Evidently not the right sort of Archbishop for Catherine. Now—write the name—Gaston de Gardeville—I want all the press notices, remember, of anything of his that's been reëdited in the last year—he must see that I get—or rather that *you* get everything printed about him."

Peggy scribbled for a moment. What a fuss and waste of good time all about a man—dead—and his writings which nobody wanted to read—there were always new writers and if you knew what to ask for, printed fuel for the little lapping flames life kindled. Pat Carmichael had called them ironically, "gas fires," because you could turn them on and off as you wanted. Much better thought Peggy than the *"chauffage centrale"* of a *grande passion* which must be horribly stuffy and boring.

"By the way, Peggy, when I came out here I'd quite forgotten we should be so near that absurd place, Lourdes. Just the thing to make Catherine worse—unless you see to things more, she will be going over there." Peggy lifted her locks with her pencil, and glanced curiously at Chris. Really, of the two, her hostess was madder than Catherine in her restless fighting against her daughter's "tendencies."

"She'll be sure to go there if she's as piously inclined as you think. Even the ordinary London papers write about it—I mean to go too and look round, but I heard there was nothing doing in the winter."

"A horrid sordid little place. I once went years ago and I hope never to set eyes on it again. All the same, it wouldn't be a bad idea if you made a point of going with Catherine—you can keep her sane and point out in your own way your view of it all."

Peggy got up and stretched herself.

"I guess right here some beverage is indicated," she said, with an affected nasal drawl, and Chris, pointing to a tray on a side table, said slowly:

"It's about time you began to pull yourself together, Peggy—it isn't only your complexion that's going to the devil—"

Peggy gave a shout of laughter. She was busy, with her back to Chris.

"What's wrong with my complexion—it's a most expensive one? So's my reputation. Here's to you, darlin'——"

* * * *

Chris lay for a long time, a deep frown on her face, after Peggy had gone to bed. With all her intense ultra-modernism, there were some things that revolted her in it. At first she had laughed at and rather admired the attitude of Peggy and her type, as regarded their growing emancipation, their boyish freedom, their chatter on every subject under the sun, their general "cocksureness." But something in their frank amours, the unwholesome quarrying of this type of youth in things that genuinely disgusted Chris in spite of her affected sympathy, their mannish appetites, so she called it, and particularly mannish thirsts, all began to make her feel as if she had chosen a dusty third-class carriage to travel through life in—one, too, that smelled of stale smoke and that was in a disreputable state of repair—one that was a disgrace to the Line.

And across the bad fumes of her thoughts, came the clear vision of Catherine. It was like a breath of pure air. There was breeding, race in everything she did, thought. Chris called it breeding, race, and at the bottom of her heart was proud of it, but as she lay there unconsciously comparing the two types of girl, she knew that so far as race went, the Harlingtons' family left nothing to be desired. It was something more with Catherine. The frown became a little deeper as she thought of the long heritage of Catholic ancestry that was the girl's—an ancestry that had not only fought and died for its kings, its country, but one that counted its martyrs massacred for the Faith. She remembered going in the early days of her married life to visit the little walled-in garden of a

convent in Paris, where were buried the victims of one day's guillotine during the Terror, including three of Gaston's family, two of whom had been nuns. He had told her, as they stood looking through the locked gate into the little green square with its shady trees, that one of the nuns, the youngest of several from the same convent to be executed, had been summoned first to mount the steps. She had knelt for a moment before her Superior whose execution was to be the last, and demanded of her *"la permission de mourir!"* Chris could suddenly see Catherine doing all that. Was it any use trying to stamp out what she most assuredly had in her blood?

Chris flung her cover off—how hot it was in the room! What would have happened if Gaston had not died! Would his "race" be stronger in him than her daily, hourly influence? He had adored her—but his natural Catholic ardor sprang from something deeper than her opposition to it did. She had not even Protestant blood in her—it would be an insult to Protestantism to call her pure paganism, the paganism of her forbears, by a name that stands for godliness of varying degrees. He had been so really wonderful, that time when she had been receiving instruction in Paris. Heavens—how could she have gone through with it? She was always late arriving at that bleak bare *"parloir,"* and the priest had been rather blind and rather deaf and disposed to be very satisfied with her remarks and replies. The fact that she was de Gardeville's *fiancée* was sufficient guarantee for her genuine dispositions.

No, she wasn't going to think of that year after, she wanted to forget everything, *everything*.

But how could she, with Gaston's and her own child before her, reproducing in her voice, her ways, her outlook on life, all the long forgotten, but long-loved de Gardeville traits!

"Really," she muttered to herself, as she rang the bell violently for the nurse, "my influence on Gaston was soon over. He broke, and died. His on me is lasting longer. He died, but something of him lives and follows me.

CHAPTER XXIV

BERTRON had recently painted a certain great lady who had graciously accorded him several sittings, and who had now left Paris. The portrait was on view, and the fashionable crowds had gazed their fill at the calm dignified figure so perfectly restful in its easy immobility, but beneath whose dark eyes there was the tragic shadow of great unanswered questions.

This afternoon the Bertrons had invited their own and their son-in-law's immediate friends; and Céline Lacour, very pretty in her new winter furs, was, for the moment, the center of a group of women. She was being the recipient of congratulations, mingled with condolences. There was to be a baby in the *famille Lacour* before the spring, and little Céline was being petted and made much of by her own people. Yes —René was very pleased—no she was not annoyed—no—nor was she afraid. *Que voulez-vous,* it was *le bon Dieu* made us women so. It slipped from Céline, and several women sneered a little, and all of them laughed and she shrugged her shoulders and threw her heavy coat on to a chair.

"If you don't take care, beginning like this, you and René and all the little Lacours will be gazing into space from the pages of a newspaper, cited as one of *les belles familles de France,*" exclaimed a fashionable

young woman who had stared at Céline as if she were a curiosity. Every one laughed, and Céline, a little flushed, took refuge behind her father who was spreading himself on a large chair, talking to her husband, who stood before him.

Bertron prided himself on being all things to all men! In his profession it was politic, and also Papa Bertron preferred the smiling side of things. He had strongly opposed Céline's marriage with the young anti-clerical deputy, because he himself had arrived at that position in life where it was best to have no violent labels, either red, white, yellow, or even too much tricolor. He had steered a pleasant and a profitable course through all the shoals, but there had been a moment when his labels, if they inclined to one color more than another, were toward yellow. Just at that time it will be remembered, he was painting the Cardinal and other prelates. So that this marriage of his daughter with René Lacour of the extreme *gauche* had annoyed him considerably.

But that was a long time ago. He had got over it soon—and had found himself getting by degrees more and more merged in Lacour's milieu. Deputies of the deepest red found their way to his studio, which did not seem to prevent those of the most blameless white from sunning themselves in the presence of that last portrait on the great stand. Extremes met, and they found common ties, and Papa Bertran rubbed his hands and found as he generally had done all his life, that it was a good world—a gay world—if you didn't take it *au grand serieux*. He was in good humor

to-day. Not only had he been adding considerably to his exchequer recently, but quite appreciably to his reputation. By a certain conformity, allied to a broad-minded genial verbosity, he had made himself the popular rendezvous of more than one party in Paris. It was something to have achieved. He held out a well-manicured, large white hand to a smiling man who, if he could have stabbed with decency, would have been glad to cut short the life of the tall man who was shaking Bertron's left hand.

"Aha—my friends—my little ones who have neglected Papa Bertron for so long! You, Borel, you turn innumerable handles of your great machine and roll out subtle profanities of inexhaustible wit, and you, my good Toulon, you paint the wisdom of the heavens and the earth and frame it in jewels plucked from Our Lady's crown." His rich voice rolled his pretty phrases, and Toulon, laughing, put his hand to his head in mock despair.

"I sound like a common thief, or at least a receiver of stolen goods," he said, and held out his hands to Céline who smiled up at him. Borel shot a malicious glance at him as he followed Lacour to a buffet.

"I didn't know you and Madame were such great friends of Toulon's," he said significantly.

"He is her godfather—merely a formality, as you know. I wonder if he's going to stay long."

Lacour had wanted to warn Bertron about something before his guests arrived, but there had been no chance. He looked round the studio. *Par exemple*—the first one who spoke of it would set the match to

the powder and there would be a mighty explosion! The doors opened to let in three or four ladies with whom were two men Toulon recognized as the "scientists" of his last visit to the studio. He leaned back against the window, his arms folded, listening to Madame Bertron and a learned professor of psychology trying to find a common meeting ground. They were not long in doing so, on the subject of the august original of the portrait. The room was very warm, but it was going to be warmer. Suddenly above the hubbub of voices, the strident voice of one of the "scientists" was heard, as he craned a long neck to catch the eye of the man he addressed.

"Doubtless Monsieur Toulon is waiting to be congratulated on the articles that have appeared yesterday and to-day, with the latest legend of de Gardeville."

It was insultingly phrased and spoken, and there was a little murmur in the room. Toulon was by far the most distinguished person there,—it was a privileged host who could say Henri Toulon had honored his reception. Toulon uncrossed his arms slowly, and stroked his square clean-shaven chin very deliberately.

"Legends do not give chapter and verse as a rule, monsieur, but I bow to your superior knowledge—it is more your metier than mine, legends." Bertron was at sea. He did not know what they were talking of, but he would have no impertinences from any "party" in his house to such a guest as Toulon. He was trying to get near the *"académicien"* when Borel broke out:

"One can never be sure where and when the poison

will break out again. We should have taken de Gardeville with more caution. What we thought was a permanent cure was simply a temporary lull in the fever."

Lacour was rapidly explaining to Bertron that Toulon and others had published yesterday and to-day the history of how de Gardeville had retracted his "errors" and made his submission. Bertron was genuinely moved: he had had an affection for the young man, and he had regretted his later books, though chiefly for what he considered their political errors.

He stood up, the tallest man in the room, his pointed white beard seized in one hand as he laid the other on the chair back.

"Borel, your talk suggests the boulevards when you call de Gardeville's religion—and incidentally ours" —he waved a hand round as if to include his family and whatever friends wish to be included—"a poison. All that is left for you others—you who manœuvered his apostasy, to do, is to call in his books which belong to the—shall we call it the——"

"I deny that we manœuvered his apostasy," shouted the scientist roughly. "If his faith was so thin and superficial, that mixing with intellectuals extinguished it, that is not our fault."

Toulon smiled serenely.

"Your friend Monsieur Borel has just spoken of de Gardeville's apostasy as a temporary lull in the fever—of his Catholicity I presume. Now you speak of that Catholicity being extinguished. How then do

you account for his entire retraction of that part of his life which belonged to your party?"

Several men began to speak at once but Bertron silenced them peremptorily.

"Monsieur Grenier, *vous avez la parole,*" he said magisterially and there was a little laughter which relieved the tension. The scientist continued, however, in an aggressive voice:

"Your account in all the papers shows that he was wearing himself out in his charitable services to the sick—where was it—ah, Caussac. We all know how overstrain works on the nerves. He was meeting the priest every day at deathbeds, and working with religious nursing sisters——"

"Not one," threw in Toulon gently, "the woman who helped him, was a woman your Préfet delighted to honor."

But nothing was going to stem the torrent of anger that poured from the lips of Grenier and Borel, till suddenly Lacour broke in forcefully:

"It's a bad blow in one sense, Grenier—but we can't overlook the facts as reported from the parochial archives. The dispensations—" a loud snort from Borel—"the dispensations were all in order and everything shows that it was a full month before there was the least sign of de Gardeville's falling a victim to the fever. After all, gentlemen, does it matter much to us how he died? The chief thing our world—shall I say our party—considers, is how he lived—what he lived for—and those two last most prolific and powerful years of his life are *ours.*"

A growing murmur of satisfaction began to be heard and Borel tried to speak.

"One moment, Monsieur. Those two years made more mark on the world—so *we* think—than his previous ten years. The manner of his death will be hardly known—in any case it will soon be forgotten. It is a man's life—not his death that counts. His last books are classics—classics of the new thought. Nothing less than his printed word could undo what he wrote and taught—and, happily, gentlemen, for the party, for the state, de Gardeville seems to have been otherwise occupied at the last than in writing his apologia. To destroy the power of his classics, to destroy their influence then, would take longer than it took to accomplish the fall of Jericho. I may safely say that in much less than the biblical term of seven years, de Gardeville will still reign in people's mind as our greatest convert." Lacour was cheered as he finished his little impromptu speech, but there was much whispering and talking together, and presently Grenier and Borel came up to take their leave of Madame Bertron, who was speaking to Toulon. As they turned from her, Toulon held out his hand smiling.

"Come, Monsieur Grenier, it is—let us call it—the fortune of war."

"What else would you call it, Monsieur?" asked Grenier in a frozen voice, as he gingerly placed the tips of his long fingers in Toulon's firm grasp.

"Personally, I should call it the salvation of his soul —the hand of God—the everlasting mercy," was the quiet reply, and Grenier shrugged his shoulders.

"*Parfait,* Monsieur. It sounds like a list of your very distinguished works about to be published. But—" his voice was louder now and the room listened, "but we have not said the last word yet. We can—possibly—do without him, but for the present, as you say, let us call it the fortune of war." He bowed, heels together, a stiff abrupt bow that dismissed Toulon and his type from his sight, and left the studio with Borel who contented himself with saying, as he nodded to Lacour, who stood behind Toulon:

"The Church can't afford to let these little triumphs pass in quiet. She has to use them all—cement to fill up the cracks——"

Toulon laughed so gayly, that all the women smiled and Papa Bertron, who was very embarrassed at the way things had gone, smiled cheerfully.

"Aha, Monsieur Borel—not for nothing are you a *maçon*—albeit a *franç-macon!* You have a practical mind. But remember the gates of hell shall not prevail—against the edifice that is not built by hands."

Bertron rubbed his hands as he listened to Toulon's words, and before the door had closed on his two excited guests, he remarked dryly, with a twinkle in his eyes:

"The certain proof surely for all good Frenchmen, that France is in truth the eldest daughter of the Church, is that she always has the last word."

The door banged, and Céline blew a little kiss in its direction, while her father buttonholed Toulon and made him give a detailed history of the event. He had not yet seen any of the reviews. Céline was stooping over a large folio at the end of the room, and

Lacour, seeing her efforts to open it, hurried up, at the same moment that Toulon, released from Bertron's grip, joined her. The two men lifted the folio on to a table—while Céline laughingly warned them of the dust on her father's "properties."

"What is it you want, Céline—these are very ancient ones—" Lacour flicked the dust off his fingers as he spoke.

"Yes—I know—but look you, you've been talking ancient history all the afternoon, and I want to see again the portrait of that man whose soul couldn't be drugged."

Her husband stared at her. Céline was a funny little thing, hugging secretly, he knew, all her convent training, which at times sank into abeyance and at times burst out into pathetic energy. Just now of course she must be humored and spoilt a little.

"It's exactly what I was going to ask to see."

Toulon steadied the little table and watched the girl search till she found the sketch her father had made so long ago.

"There—St. Anthony—do you remember telling me?"

Toulon smiled and nodded, and Lacour, after his first glance at the portrait, watched his eyes deepen and soften as he recognized and remembered his old friend who had made such a mark on his life.

"Thank you, René, thank you, *Parrain*—I'll take this to Papa. He's got to give it to you." She flashed a smile at Toulon who looked pleased.

"Nothing could please me more—but I should simply have to give it to his daughter. I want to tell

you about her." Lacour leaned against the back of Céline's chair as she sat and listened to all Toulon had to tell her. He was rather glad her husband was there to hear the history of Catherine and her mother —of what her upbringing had been, her disabilities, her ignorance of her natural rights and heritage, and so on, up to her visit to her father's grave for the first time.

It was then he told her, what she already knew, of that last book of de Gardeville's which awaited its last chapter, refused by his widow, but the story was meant for Lacour, who listened with polite interest, and showed no special emotion. So he *had* written his apologia. His last "classic"—and from the grave! Céline had shed several tears during the recital of Catherine's history. She came back to it again, after Toulon had spoken of the book. What interested her was the little baby left behind at Caussac, and the young father arriving with it at the church, for its tardy baptism. René had put his hand on her shoulder when she had wiped her eyes with her little wispy handkerchief, and now she put up her hand and laid it on his.

"Ecoute, mon petit," she said naïvely, turning her head up and smiling through her tears, "your little Céline is going to die, and her son with her, if you forbid him to be baptized."

"Exactly at what period do you intend to quit this world, my little one?" laughed her husband, pinching her ear, and Céline shook her head.

"That I cannot tell you and I shall keep it secret.

But quite seriously, we are going to give Philippe André his chance at the start—there is no fear about that, Parrain," she said, and this time Lacour murmured:

"No, no—that was all settled long ago."

As Toulon walked back down the Avenue Friedland, he stopped at the little kiosk next the Corpus Christi Church. Already there were posters about de Gardeville. One had on it in large letters:

HOW DE GARDEVILLE DIED
OLD HISTORY REVIVED

He passed on, and turned into the quiet Spanish church where the noise of the city sounded so dim and far away. As he put some money into the hand of a blind beggar on the steps he said:

"Will you say a prayer for me—and for France?"

"Yes, Monsieur, with all my heart," said the beggar.

CHAPTER XXV

PEGGY was in a bad temper. She had mortgaged a good deal of what Chris had promised her in bringing over two Irish hunters, and she was annoyed to find that they were too big for good hunting in France. She had laughed at Catherine when the girl, who had lived so long in the country, told her that she would do better to find a hunter when she got to Pau. She looked at Catherine—trim and boylike—almost part of the small neat horse which seemed to recognize a compatriot in her and which answered so quickly to her hand.

Catherine was hunting rather under protest—she had lost a little of her love for it since her mother's accident, and it was only Chris's repeated urging that made her go out now and then with the Pau pack. Nothing would induce John Lambeth to hunt. He said he was heartily glad to give it up: that all he liked was an elderly trot in the open country where you could get away from law-breaking motorists. So Chris patted his hand in a sudden touch of affection, knowing his real reason, and scolded him no more. She had let him come to talk to her lately, finding that it rather rested her to see him lying back in a deep chair by the fire, smoking contentedly over his *Times*,

or working out a chess problem that was to intrigue Catherine later on.

He was hugging to himself a little secret surprise he had for her birthday early next month. He had met Mademoiselle Alice Parguez, the miniaturist, at a friend's house in Pau, and he had induced her to bring some of her exquisite works of art to the Villa de la Fontaine for his wife to see. Chris thought that the lady herself was more worth looking at than anything she could paint on ivory. The tall, distinguished, elegant woman with the air of royalty and the gentlest simplicity, made Chris want to get up and receive her as royalty should be received.

Then came the surprised admiration of her work, and in spite of Chris's protests, John had begged that Mademoiselle should do a miniature of his wife from a photograph taken just before her accident. But John's private surprise was the exquisite miniature—a larger one—that Mademoiselle Parguez had made of Catherine, which had been sent to Paris with the artist herself, to be framed suitably. It was to be sent by post or rail, as Mademoiselle was not returning immediately, and Chris was to know nothing of it till the packet arrived. Then one morning, John had found Chris's door barred to him. "Not very well—" was the reason given, and he had learned that when her attendants said that in a certain way, it was not wise to insist. Yes, she had had a fairly good night, but she wished to remain quiet and undisturbed this morning, so John went down again to see if Catherine would presently ride out with him. But she had gone

off in her car, thinking no doubt that his morning would be spent, as it had been lately, between Chris's room and his study.

"Where are my letters?" he asked the butler, in an impatient voice. He hated this recent custom of locked bags, and having to wait till Chris remembered to send down what belonged to the rest of the house. He had objected when she told him about it, but, after all, it was a little thing to give up when it amused her and, well, well—she could do what she liked with him, and she knew it.

"Madame has the correspondence upstairs—there was also a bag that contained books," the *facteur* said, "so I put them in Monsieur's study." Nicholas bowed himself out after he had indicated the post bag. It was an extremely unpopular fashion Madame had set, and was far from assisting any *entente cordiale* in the servants' hall—*"au contraire,"* as even Nicholas with no love affairs had said.

John tossed out all the papers and magazines. Every one of them addressed to Peggy. He smiled wryly—Peggy reading *Les Etudes!* Or any other paper or periodical of that ilk! Paggy opening any of those reviews whose serious names were printed on their serious covers! He bundled them all back again and rang.

"Take these to Madame—" he said, and wished he might be there to see Chris laugh at Peggy's "correspondence." It was a really priceless joke. He felt more cheerful already. So he sauntered out, and crossed the beautiful gardens where, if you sat long

enough, he said, you met every one you ever knew or were likely to know. It was quite warm enough to enjoy the view there, but it took him a little time to find a seat which was not occupied by nurses and climbing infants. Then he opened his *Times,* and forgot all about the magnificent view before him, for the first thing that met his eyes was the review of a new edition of Gaston de Gardeville's book which had been condemned. Not that it had ever worried John Lambeth, the Index, but a lapse from form in any department of life was, to his kind, the unforgivable sin. The *Times* spoke of the "lapse" from "form" in its usual gentlemanly way, and rather gave the impression that it thought de Gardeville a remarkably able man, and that if he had only been born on this side of the Channel, his super-pagan book would not have made such an ecclesiastical splash—meaning that it would hardly have been distinguished from the teaching of doctrine of many eminent English "divines"—not of the Catholic Church.

John was quite "upset" by the time he had finished it. He folded the paper up tightly. Chris must not see this or any other journal that might mention the unfortunate man. He would be careful to watch for them. And he would just go and order some flowers for Chris from that shop in the rue du Lycée, and get back again—in case she wanted him. He would spend whole hours in his study waiting "in case she wanted him"—and that happened so rarely. It was annoying the man was never really dead. Some men simply don't die—men who had something besides mere brains

and wit and a personality. He wasn't quite sure what it was, but he felt pretty certain that when *he* died that would be the end of John Lambeth as far as this world was concerned. The late war had seen the best of him and it was little enough. Then there was—well—he could mention most of the men he met every day—apart from the rank of some, the sport of others, the wealth or connections or perhaps political or patriotic achievement of a few, he was sure that when they died too, they would die *dead*. No—it was these other men who seemed to be sort of *liaison* officers between earth and heaven, between body and soul, not—oh, certainly not the parson type of man though of course they were the accredited agents for heaven—but—well, de Gardeville and his sort who materialized ideals—or by Jove was it that they idealized life, and made a sort of supernatural thing of it. And they gave so much of themselves to it, that though they died, life was full of them, just as if they lived.

"I believe he's as alive for Chris still, as if he were in the flesh," he thought lugubriously as he turned toward the Avenue Trespoey, and rather envied the man who had died—but who could still live.

As he passed the big gates of the Reparatrice Convent, a lady came out of them, but his head was bent, his hands clasped behind him, and he took no notice. He was conscious that a motor car was waiting there, and that was all, till a voice broke into his reflections.

"Colonel Lambeth!" He turned quietly, and Lady Mary Lanescourt held out her hand. He thought she looked older—as if she had had a sorrow, but she

smilingly exclaimed her pleasure at meeting him. She had arrived last night—passing through Pau only, and hoped to be back in Westshire next week. She was, in fact, leaving directly after lunch, otherwise she would have given herself the pleasure of calling on Mrs. Lambeth. She asked sympathetically about her and seemed to want to prevent Colonel Lambeth from inquiring in common politeness about her family.

He said some one had seen one of her sons, he supposed Roger, the other day in Paris and she said yes, they had spent a few days there.

"Remember me very kindly to your wife," she said as John handed her in and closed the door of the car, and it was only afterward that he realized she had not mentioned Catherine's name—nor inquired for her. Just a slip of course—he thought she had looked a little distrait—she was aging too, and looked tired.

And Lady Mary, leaning back in her corner, held her hands tightly clasped, and forced herself to say calmly:

"Not yet—I couldn't get the girl's name out—not yet."

Chris lay very still—quite alone all that morning. The torn paper covers of reviews, magazines, journals, lay about her and on the floor. It had been like something she had never experienced before. At first, every pulse in her body had throbbed in an impotent fury—but something greater than her anger had taken its place. It was as if she read the story of the man who personified something beyond her imagination, a Something, that had been loved and revered by his world,

since the beginning of time. And that Something was set forth in words Chris had never read before, that lifted for her a little corner of the black veil she had roughly placed or that had been placed for her between her world and any other. As she read, and not only the parts marked in blue pencil, but every word of the articles—a tiny suggestion of guilt crept into her mind. It was *she* who had tried to pour the vitriol of unbelief over a man who was a part of *that!*

She read one after another, flinging it away as she finished—hurriedly opening the next. Who was going to accuse her? What were they going to say? There was Toulon's article—written as only Henri Toulon could write when he had something close at heart. Perhaps for that reason it was the more restrained—and not a word of her influence, not a line to indicate that she existed! A well-known Jesuit wrote in another review, and as Chris finished reading it, her mind sought her own conception of the Catholic faith, preferring to justify her blind hatred, and to sulk at this setting forth of what men had died to keep. And again, there was no mention of her, nor even of his marriage. She picked up another. Here it was—the first article in the thick bi-monthly magazine by a bishop, a savant, an orator, a man whose books were translated and eagerly read by thinkers and workers—whose sermons were broadcast from the Cathedral that could not hold the cosmopolitan crowds who listened to him. He had thought *all that* of Gaston—and *all that* of what she had set out to destroy in him? Not a word in this either of his private affairs.

Lastly, a great marshal of France had written of this crusader of God, Gaston de Gardeville, whose ancestor, he recalled to his readers, had won his spurs in the Crusades, and who had taken for his motto those words St. Louis himself had chosen for him and that played so aptly on his name:

"Except the Lord guard the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

He wrote of Gaston, this young crusader of later days going so blithely into battle—the battle of life where he had been so grievously wounded and taken prisoner by the enemy, and how, at the last, he had had grace given him to find his native country again, and to die in it, confessing his faith.

Her share was again left out. Chris lay very still. They were all Catholics who had written, and every one had spared her. Not one had even mentioned his marriage. No one had attributed the blame of his changed views to her influence. One had said "his milieu became changed about this time," and another that "the circle of his friends had become less eclectic about this period": that "his friends began to see less and less of him soon after the publication of his magnum opus which men said was but the forerunner of a greater one to come." This must be a prearranged conspiracy, Chris said to herself. For eighteen, nearly nineteen years she had triumphed in the thought that he had bent to her will, that she had helped a clever, but mistaken man to cast off his shackles and become a real leader of real men. Now —Paris was laughing at her, and saying either that

de Gardeville had played a trick on her or that she had played one on her world—his world, and that she had either known all along that he had gone back to the Church and she had kept it quiet, or that she never knew and that her ignorance of it proved her incapacity to have ever been of service to such a man.

Of course it was Toulon who had done all this. She picked up the papers, with their short or longer abridged reviews of the magazines. Nothing had escaped them—they had the date of his reconciliation—the hour almost, the name of the priest, the description of Caussac church and presbytery, the copy of registers, dispensation, everything in cut and dried order. Then came, in each article, reference to the way he had started helping the authorities in the fever-stricken little townlet, his full month's heroic and able-bodied nursing and generous service—all *after* his submission, not before it. Every one of the writers in the reviews had spoken of a book he had written in the last months of his heresy, which awaited "certain circumstances" before it could be published.

Here at least, she stood in their way. She held the key of their "certain circumstances" and by degrees the old bitter hatred for what was beyond her forces, flooded her mind. These men, this Church, this All-absorbing Faith—*they* held Gaston—they always had done. He—and they—belonged to this current that swept steadily through hills and dales, over the rocks and under bridges, without let or hindrance, till it found the mighty sea of God Himself. All else took the river at their own risk. Oh, how maudlin she was

getting. It was lying there all alone. She gathered together what papers she could reach, and suddenly remembered that Catherine must have known of all this. Then she should suffer for it.

"I believe I'm jealous of her—she cares so much for Gaston," thought Chris, and covered her eyes. They ached with staring out of the window, through which the bright morning sun was shining. It had come out since Nurse had drawn back the curtains, and Chris liked to lie and watch the shadows and light on the distant range of Pyrenees. It was beyond that peak that Gaston lay—where he had died—all alone. It was there she had left him, because she hated ugliness and suffering and pain, and the horror of her cowardice, he had called it cowardice—had flung him back to find his consolation in his old way. She clenched her hands. No, she would not give way—she would *not* be sentimental. Herself and her own apostasy had not troubled her much—certainly not. She had "joined the Church" because she could not marry him any other way, and—ah, God, how they had loved each other! Well, that was over. It had been her own fault to put herself in the power of a Church that took every bit of you, body, soul, and spirit, past, present, future—heavens, yes, and all eternity—Gaston had been like that. A non-Catholic—was—well, it was as he had said once, like attempting to color the map of a country before you had drawn the outlines. It was—she remembered he had quoted Newman—as if a man went to look at himself in a mirror and saw—*nothing*. But the Catholic saw him-

self there in the image of God—probably she had got it wrong, but anyway it did not matter. Here was another proof of its tenacity that she could never get away from this Catholic *trail* over everything. Well, no one knew she had become Catholic to marry, though they might guess and surmise what they liked. Not even Toulon knew any details—both her witnesses were dead. No one ever should know.

CHAPTER XXVI

CATHERINE had arrived a little late at lunch that day, but John too had sat long over his papers in the study, so that they entered the dining room almost together, to find Peggy already more than halfway through hers. She was always in a hurry to keep some engagement, after which, she assured Catherine, she would be ready to "do something" with her.

John was more silent than usual, and Catherine was glad when Peggy got up, having finished a sketchy meal.

"Been out, Catherine—golfing?" he asked presently, without much interest.

"No, Daddy—did you go? I knew you meant to have a foursome this morning with the Greys," naming his friends.

"No—I telephoned them—I'm going to-morrow—they know I'm never quite sure of keeping my appointments, and they can always find plenty to take my place. What did you do?"

"Better not ask, dear—then you won't have to scold me," laughed Catherine, and John smiled wryly as he looked at her. This early church business he supposed—well, anyway, it was a better craze than any of Peggy's, and as Catherine had a lot to tell him about shooting hereabouts and some ancient customs

and traditions of the Béarnais he quite forgot to tell her that he had met Lady Mary Lanescourt.

Catherine had suddenly discovered that there was a very early train into Lourdes which arrived in time for her to hear mass at the grotto—if there should be any there—if not, certainly in the crypt, and she could visit the grotto—breakfast on her way to the station and be back in plenty of time before lunch. Her mother never wished anyone to see her till after mid-day—and if there was a morning visit it was John's prerogative.

So yesterday she had begun the novena of masses to Notre Dame de Lourdes for a great intention, and the novena would finish on the great Fête itself, the eleventh of February. It was the first she had ever made, and she was rather pleased it meant getting up very early and walking that rather long way down to the station, with the chilly half-hour or more in the train. Her car would make too much noise getting it out so early—her mother did not mind late ones arriving, but when Peggy, as she often did, arrived in the early hours, she always heard it and said she never slept afterwards. So Catherine decided she must walk to the station.

No one knew anything about her early morning doings. It was understood that Mademoiselle Catérine (Lambeth was a difficult name to pronounce) —that Mademoiselle Catérine was *"pieuse"* and went to mass at the *couvent* near. It was only lately she had not come back to breakfast but she could not be far, as her motor car was in the garage and her horse

in its box, and by the time she appeared at lunch they had forgotten about the early hours.

That first day at Lourdes, she had bought what magazines—reviews, she could find. Monsieur Toulon had said they would have the articles in, the first of the month, and she could hardly wait to get into the train before she opened them.

At Pau, almost dazed with the happiness of reading such words of her father, written by such men, she gathered the papers up in her arms and jumped out, and had to wait while a crowd of country people, with their produce for the Monday market, passed out before her. Then she sped hurriedly up the hill that led toward the villa, glad that, as she entered the house, no one seemed to be about.

"Mademoiselle—this package has just come for Madame. Shall it be opened downstairs—or taken up as it is?" demanded Nicholas, from the hall as she went upstairs.

Catherine turned, and from halfway up the stairs saw the slight wooden case on a bench.

"Oh, I think it must go up as it is. Madame will prefer that it is opened before her."

"Very good, Mademoiselle," Nicholas called a maid to help him up with it, and waited while Madame was told that a package had been brought up to her.

The nurse explained that it was one that might make rather a mess to be opened in her room, but a sheet was laid down on the rugs of the parquet, and Nicholas had deftly done his work before Chris realized what it could be.

Oh, of course, John had told her this portrait of Catherine was coming, but she had imagined it was going to be a miniature. Well—just now she didn't want to open Catherine's portrait before these people —it could wait, Catherine always waited.

"Yes—leave the paper over it—if you put it on this chair here I can cut the string and do the rest presently."

Nurse directed the clearing away of everything, propped the picture in its soft paper coverings beside Chris, and presently left the room. Chris was writing a few notes, and presently, those finished, she took up a new book and began cutting the pages. Since those reviews she had read yesterday, she had been restless, almost wretched, and to-morrow was Sunday when a particularly large number of guests was expected. She must make an effort to get herself back into her callous indifferent self. Absurd of John to have such a large picture of Catherine—it must be head and bust—quite a mistake. A girl like Catherine should be painted in the whole figure—and it ought to have been done under her own directions. A miniature was another matter and would have been charming, but John was a little clumsy left to his own devices.

She took the scissors Nurse had left in her reach and cut the strings. The paper was easily pushed on one side and fell.

But—but it was Gaston—Gaston—who stood there, his eyes on hers! Gaston, as he had looked just after he had left her when she had lain in his arms and promised him all the things he had asked her. She

put her hand to her heart—its beating almost shook the bed. How had this portrait come to her? Who had sent it? but, oh, what did it matter! Gaston was there, with that serene grave face and the eyes that had laughter in them—the lips that would have seemed severe if it had not been for those little upward lines that suggested a *gaité de cœur* that had expressed the man.

Chris tried to raise herself—she strained her head as much as she could. She must see every bit of the picture.

Yes—he was there to remind her of her promises. It was no mere thing of oils and canvas—when he was like that—why—suddenly Chris caught her breath. He must have had that sketch done the very day of their engagement! She had stuck one of her little pearl pins in his tie and he had lost it to his horror the next day. She remembered his absurd rage and grief, and how she had given him a different one, one more suitable for him. But here was that silly little pearl on the bent pin, put in not very neatly because he had tried to kiss her hands as she was doing it.

"Gaston—I've been vile all along. I didn't deserve a hundredth part of your love—" she whispered and he seemed to hear and understand. Yes, he looked at her —of course—she must explain—but he too, he had "not kept his promise"—and his eyes lost their laughter—how could that be? They were actually looking very gravely at her—well, yes, Gaston, but he must understand—he *used* to when she explained—that

she had nothing in her blood, in her traditions to correspond to his which had made his faith so necessary to him, or not so much necessary to him as a vital part of him. Yes—but those eyes were asking more of her. The gayety had gone from them—she knew when it began to go. She had laughed at his ardor, ridiculed his "childish ideas," gently, wittily; drawn him into a circle that interested and intrigued his intellectual side. It was after that that the *"gaité du cœur"* had gone, that the laughter seemed to go out of his eyes—and gave place to a laughter that sounded uncertain of its reason. This Gaston before her now had no grim lines about the mouth. Was it she who had put them there in those two short years?

"Gaston—" a whispered appeal—"Gaston, forgive me—" She almost held out her hand to him, but there was something that still seemed to keep her at a distance. She was certain when she had seen it first, the eyes were laughing, but she could only find reproach in them now, a deep melancholy as if his thoughts were too sorrowful for smiles.

She lay motionless, her head still painfully stretched to gaze at it, and suddenly, as if she heard some one remind her, the thought of that last "chapter of Salvation" came to her mind.

She would give it up. It should be sent.

"I will send it, *mon petit*—" The words came slowly, hesitatingly, as if against her will and she thought the eyes searched her face with that questioning uneasiness she had so often seen in them—when she had promised him things—and not kept her word!

"I promise you," she cried, blinded with sudden tears, and fell back fainting on her pillow.

The nurse was told later to place the portrait, over which Chris had thrown one of her shawls, against the wall. Then to push a large chair before it—and to give her a strong sleeping draught. But it was long before sleep came to her that night.

John had been told that a large package had been taken to her room.

"Large? Not the miniature then?" he asked Catherine.

"Oh, no—it was at least three feet square," she said.

Later on he found Chris's door barred, and the nurse told him how she had found Mrs. Lambeth. That evidently something she had received had been too much for her or perhaps she had made some effort to sit up or move and had fainted. Why had he not been told? Because Mrs. Lambeth had forbidden her to speak of it even to the doctor, but whatever the picture was, it was covered with a shawl and tilted against the wall in her bedroom. And without thinking, he had asked Nurse what the picture was and she had said it was the portrait of a young man—probably of a relation she had lost.

John Lambeth returned to his study where Catherine came to him, pale and troubled, with a letter in her hand.

"Daddy, I believe there's been a mistake, which may account for it all. That package was—or ought to have been addressed to me. It was Monsieur

Toulon who sent me a portrait of my father—and the people who framed it evidently muddled the Miss and Mrs."

"Good God!" exclaimed John, sitting back in his chair staring at the girl, and feeling as if the first husband himself had turned up and he were committing bigamy.

"Daddy, do go up and see what has happened. Will you be able to get it for me? Tell her it was one Bertron did years ago, chiefly from memory, and that it was quite by chance Monsieur Toulon saw it one day and thought I should like to have it."

"Yes, yes," said John a little impatiently. Here he was again, that man. Still, he was Catherine's father —though of course a Frenchman. And then Nicholas had intruded his long lean face with its absurd side whiskers into the room and said in a mysterious voice, "Madame desires Mademoiselle to go to her."

Catherine nodded, but her heart sank, and John guessed the girl's feelings. He leaned forward and laid his hand on hers as she stood by his table.

"Cheer up, my dear," he said in his kind benevolent way, "you shall have that portrait, and remember hard words never broke any bones—so put up with whatever is said—" Catherine squeezed his hand, smiling at him, and hurried from the room.

If only she had done no injury to that portrait! Supposing her mother had vented her anger on it and there would be nothing but a multilated canvas instead of the beautiful painting that the celebrated Bertron had done of her beloved father!

The nurse waited at the door to let Catherine in, and passed out herself.

"Not many minutes, Miss Lambeth—she seems tired," she said.

Catherine came quickly up to the couch near the window, and as she approached, Chris turned her head and looked at her, long and curiously. There was no sign of a picture about, but all the same, she could see nothing but her mother's face which looked thin and white, and the bright dark eyes that regarded her so intently. Chris was covered with a brilliant blue and gold shawl whose fringe swept the floor and a ray of sun was making the curious pattern seem alive. She held out her hand to the girl who stooped and kissed it.

"Are you better, Mother darling?" Catherine said and wondered a little that the hand was not withdrawn. Instead it seemed to hold her.

"I hope so. I don't want to talk much though. Would you take this key and unlock that top drawer in my writing table." Catherine took the key and went to the table she had once so unwillingly sat at to "sort" things.

"And now—there is only one packet in—you will not mistake it. Yes—that one. Bring it here."

Catherine flushed suddenly. This was the packet—the manuscript she had sent to Toulon which he had been asked to return, and which Catherine understood had been destroyed. Was it going to be destroyed now before her eyes!

Chris took it for a moment as if to verify it and then she said quickly:

"This is the manuscript of your father's that Monsieur Toulon wanted to complete the book. Here it is, Catherine—send it to him. There is a portrait which has arrived—it may be by mistake—I will send it to your room later. Now—that is all——"

"Oh, Mother!" was all Catherine could say as she bent to kiss her hand gratefully, and longed to put her arms round her mother and tell her how she loved her. But Chris only smiled a little at the girl's emotion, and as she motioned her to go she said in a gentler voice than Catherine had heard for a long time:

"You were a loyal child, Catherine——"

It was a Catherine blinded with tears who fumbled at the door handle a minute later. For her mother to have said that! And she held the precious document in her hand—and she was going to have her beloved father's picture to-day. Surely this was Our Lady of Lourdes' answer to her prayers, but it was not what she was making the novena for—that was for something infinitely more important!

Chris pulled the shawl off the portrait with a firm hand. It stood again on the chair where Nurse had placed it. She was to come back in five minutes to take it up to Miss de Gardeville's room.

"Whose room—I beg your pardon?"

"Miss de Gardeville's—she prefers her own name: we have all fallen into the habit of calling her Lambeth, but it can't go on," Chris had laughed in an amused way, as she lay idly polishing her nails. When the woman had gone, she pulled aside the covering.

It was a different Chris who searched the grave eyes

of the portrait. "I have done what you wanted Gaston—" she whispered and seemed to wait for his approval. Why was it he seemed to have lost that laughter she was sure she had seen in his eyes when she first saw the portrait?

"I have done what you wanted Gaston—Gaston!" she repeated a little more insistently, and then, hypnotized as it were by his grave eyes, she lay looking, looking into his until—*Had* she done what he wanted? But—that was another matter! And Gaston only looked coldly, gravely at her. The little lines she had thought so smiling looked only like tiredness, severity after all.

"You can take this portrait up to Miss de Gardeville's room, please—and now I will rest till lunch."

John found her quite cheerful and gay when he paid his visit later. He explained the mistake, and she said it was quite like a French shop to put Mrs. for Miss —it was a most deluding word for them. That Catherine was pleased to have the portrait—of course anything of Bertron's was not to be sneezed at, she was a lucky girl. His letters? She was sorry—yes, she would give orders they should be delivered in the usual way—she knew she was full of cranks—he mustn't mind. Mind! John began to mumble in ecstasy over her hand which she had penitently thrust into his, and to tell her that she should do whatever mortal thing she wanted. Cranks? Of course they weren't. He could get along without his damned letters very well if she liked to have the bag—and so on.

Then for two or three days no one was allowed into Chris's room. She had days like that lately, when Nurse told Catherine who hung about the door, that her mother lay quite still looking out of the window. She would never have the blinds or the curtains drawn, unless it was so cloudy and misty that the mountains were invisible. She would lie for hours like that.

It was the eighth day of the Novena. Catherine came back very cold and wet, feeling too drenched to take a taxi or even to get into the tram that would take her up the hill. She had stayed a long time at the grotto, and had stood and knelt in luscious pools, and been dripped on by other people's umbrellas, but she had had a great deal to say. She didn't suppose what she had asked *could* be granted in so short a space of time but she would take what had already happened about the manuscript and the portrait and her mother's gentleness as the answer to her novena, and the rest—her real petition—well, she would just go on praying.

Then to complete her damp cold condition, she went into the Piscines. Apparently she was the only one who had ventured to ask for a bath on such a shivering morning, but the little smiling plump French lady with friendly brown eyes who jerked the curtains into place and said, *"Deshabillez-vous, Mademoiselle—mon Dieu,* but give me your umbrella," and clacked her tongue at its condition—this lady was enough to warm her heart. She simply radiated good will and piety as she rattled off the rosary and kept bright eyes on

the little trickles of water dropping from Catherine's burberry.

To-morrow would be the great Fête—and to-morrow too Catherine would bathe again. It would be the last day. She had promised her stepfather to ride out to Orthez with him, he wanted to see where Wellington's great battle had been fought. He was going to write to the *Times* to point out that the "h" had been left out of "Orthez" on his tomb in St. Paul's, and then he would order a dozen copies of the paper with his letter in it and send them to his particular friends.

The day of the Fête was the same pouring deluge as its predecessor, but even so, there was mass at the grotto. Several men, enveloped in their big hooded cloaks, or in mackintoshes, stood or knelt safely in the shelter of the grotto itself. The few who had braved the rain stood under their umbrellas, and others knelt on the wet step of the iron screen. Catherine put down her umbrella and tilted it against the swaying chain of the enclosure. She wanted her hands free. She wanted to look up at that statue—that was not beautiful in itself—but that helped her to think of God's Mother who had stood there unseen to every one but that little *Bienheureuse*—unseen—as Catherine was sure she was standing now, assisting herself at this sacrifice. It was so still—so perfect—only *she* could have given this divine restfulness, this *serenity* to the place.

The river lapped behind her—it helped her thoughts. She had been kneeling with bent head, and her eyes had been looking unconsciously at the mud all round her. She smiled a little as she raised them to

Our Lady—there was always mud if you looked for it, just as there was always Her if you sought Her.

And the bright-eyed plump French lady who took her umbrella with a firm hand that morning, smiled as if at an old friend—that was her nice way.

"I hope Our Lady will grant your prayers to-day, Mademoiselle," she said a cheerful smile wrinkling all over her face.

* * * *

"I don't think she wants to see anyone," John said later in the day when Catherine had met him in the corridor. "Peggy went in this morning, but she didn't stay long."

John and Catherine were alone again that night. This time the girl did not go to the piano—she sat with her book before her, dreaming. John was reading up the Napoleonic wars with a view to writing a more impressive letter to the paper.

It was very quiet in the house. She wondered what Ralph was doing—she had prayed specially at the grotto—but when wasn't she praying for him! Still, he had not been in this great intention for which she had made the novena.

As she got into bed that night, there was a knock at her door and the nurse came in.

"Mrs. Lambeth asked me to give you this. There's no answer till you see her to-morrow."

Chris had written: "You might ask any priest you know to come and see me one day."

CHAPTER XXVII

"Ah you are a very faithful cliente of Our Lady," smiled the plump Frenchwoman at the Piscines as Catherine came in next day. It was too wet to ride to Orthez, so she had sped off to Lourdes after a short visit to her mother's room—and another one, not far from the church.

"This is in thankgiving," she said as she hung up her burberry, smiling over her shoulder.

"Aha! *Je vous felicite,*" said the plump lady always cheerful, as she let in some more people.

The rain did not matter in the least thought Catherine as she made her way to the station later. The trams stood disconsolately on the lines side by side—a *panne d'electricité* having incapacitated them just when they might have been most useful. Some one in a mackintosh with a shabby, very dripping umbrella was striding up the boulevard before her. Evidently he too wanted to catch a train and regretted the elements and the *panne.*

At any rate she had her return ticket—he apparently had not as he made for the *guichet.* The train was beginning to move, and she was congratulating herself on having caught it, when the door was opened quickly, and the man who had walked in front of her sprang in—Ralph!

They stared at each other, too surprised to speak at first.

"Ralph—" she said at last, "I thought you were in Rome."

"Rome? Why Rome?—I wrote and told you when—and why I left there," he said, and her startled eyes searched his face. Yes—he looked well, but so much thinner. And there was an older, graver look on his face.

"You wrote? There were some letters I never got—it was during December and January," she said simply. He sat down suddenly. Till now he had been holding on to the rack, looking down at her. This time, he bent forward, his hands clasped before him.

"I wrote to you in December to tell you that—they said I had no vocation, or rather that my vocation was—in the world. You didn't get that, Catherine?"

His eyes met hers, looking troubled.

"No, Ralph—I never heard from you, or of you—" she repeated quietly.

"And after the New Year, I wrote again—begging you to write just one word, if not to me to my mother. She said—she thought you did not wish to—to——" He hesitated.

"I never had it, Ralph—or I would have written."

"Why didn't you get those letters—what happened?" he asked.

"You remember Monsieur Toulon—who had known my father? At that time Mother was very worried about what he meant to do—she didn't wish him to revive old memories—so—of course, the only thing

she could do was to prevent his letters arriving, and naturally—if she held back some she must hold back all."

Ralph kept back the frown he felt. It was a horrible thing to intercept letters. So that was why he had not heard. Then suddenly people got in at Betharram and they lowered their voices as they gave each other the history of that last year. Yes. He would forget all she had told him about those letters. He smiled into her happy eyes as she spoke about her mother's decision, a "cure" wrought by Our Lady of Lourdes who had let her beloved father have a hand in it, had even listened to and answered her own prayers.

"Thank God this is an 'omnibus' train," said Ralph as the carriage emptied again at a small station, "because I can't wait any longer. Catherine—Our Lady of Lourdes has done great things for me too though she didn't give us those vocations we thought we had —But—there is another vocation. Will you try it—with me?"

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